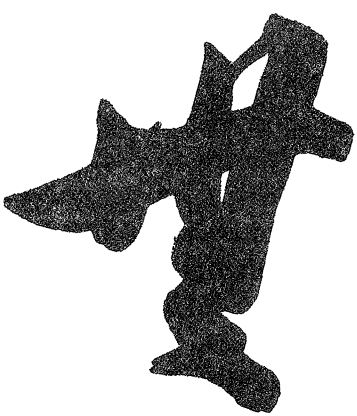
The Structure of Oriental Philosophy:

Collected Papers of the Eranos Conference

Volume I

Toshihiko Izutsu



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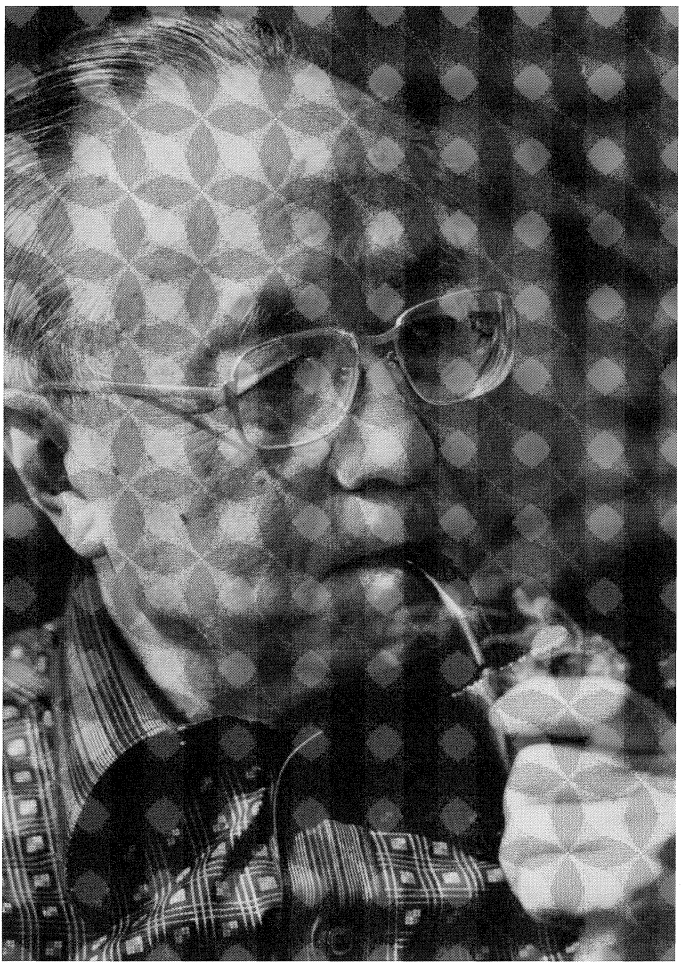

Toshihiko Izutsu
Summer 1979 in Ascona

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VOLUME I

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THE IZUTSU LIBRARY SERIES ON ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHY

Foreword to the Series

Within Oriental thought, original sources alone are so numerous as to approach the number of stars in the sky. Merely to translate these sources, even in a long-range project, would result in nothing more than a display of only those stars visible to our eyes. The Izutsu Library Series on Oriental Philosophy is intended as a collection of writings seeking to provide a guide to this constellation of Oriental thought, as well as to inherit and develop, philosophically, the dynamism of that thought.

"Oriental thought," or "Oriental philosophy," does not yet exist as a structured unity. It is an area of research in which the conceptual issues are only now beginning to appear. Our reflections are directed towards developing a framework for this area of thought. In the Orient, as is well known, many important philosophies have originated and developed since ancient times. And considerable research has been devoted to tracing the historical connections among the various traditions of thought. However, little attempt has been made to grasp the differing philosophical streams as an organically whole semantic system. In this regard, "Oriental thought" cannot be compared to its "Occidental" counterpart. The latter stands as a unity, or could be construed as a unitary form, structured on the dual semantic foundations of Hellenism and Hebraism. However, "Oriental thought" does not yet have such a form. This lack presents one of the great philosophical issues confronting the Orient at this moment.

We may safely assert that, in general, the emergence of any

systematic thought will coincide with, and be characterized by, the formation of a specific network of key concepts. And the various views of thought that evolved in the variegated traditions of the Orient are no exception. Thus, to induce a functional field of semantics, each of the specific and independent networks of key concepts contained in the traditional key texts of the Orient can be brought together, mutually correlated, integrated, and assimilated into a flexible, detailed, yet all-inclusive and closely interwoven mosaic of conceptual texture, that is to say, a semantic field as an organic and dynamic whole.

With this new semantic field in mind, the Izutsu Library Series on Oriental Philosophy intends to deal, freely and widely, with the deeper levels of traditional Oriental thought, seeking to contribute to the future and to the existential present, rather than merely to preserve the past.

Each addition to the series will be published as a translation into a Western language, with the expectation that the translation itself will naturally and necessarily open up a "space," or a functional field of semantics, in which the Orient encounters the Occident, and the traditional the existential present. We hope that this series, as a long-term project, will contribute to the development of thought in the twenty-first century and provide a conceptual "space" to construct an Oriental thought capable of supporting the pluralistic and multilayered cultural paradigm that is demanded by the coming age.

THE EDITORS

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FOREWORD

As the fourth work of the Izutsu Library Series on Oriental Philosophy, we are pleased to publish all twelve lectures given by Toshihiko Izutsu at the Eranos Conference, under the title of *The Structure of Oriental Philosophy: Collected Papers of the Eranos Conference*. As Izutsu recalls in his essay "Reminiscences of Ascona," appended at the first volume of this work, the Eranos Conference at Ascona in southern Switzerland met annually in late August for more than fifty years — from 1933 until they ended in 1988. An interdisciplinary, Gnostic approach characterized this conference. The lectures given there were published as *Eranos Jahrbuch-Yearbook-Annales* every year.

Each of this two-volume work contains, in chronological order, six of Izutsu's twelve papers, compiled and edited from the annual *Eranos Jahrbuch*. The preface by the world-famous Jungian psychologist James Hillman, who was himself a prominent Eranos lecturer, beautifully evokes the atmosphere of Izutsu's lectures. Izutsu's essay "Reminiscences of Ascona" in the appendix of the first volume vividly depicts the distinctive features of the Eranos Conference. This essay is an excerpt translated from the Japanese-language preface originally written by Izutsu as editor-in-chief of the Japanese translation series of the *Eranos Yearbook*, published by Heibon-sha Publishing Co. Hillman's preface and Izutsu's essay, we think, enable readers to envisage the special atmosphere of the Eranos Conference. At the end of the second volume, the present editor has appended his own essay about Izutsu's "Oriental philosophy" in the hope its suggestions may help readers to deepen their own understanding of his thought.

The titles of Izutsu's twelve papers, the volume of the *Eranos Jahrbuch* where they appear, and the general theme and year of the Conference are summarized below:

*The First Volume

The Absolute and the Perfect Man in Taoism
Eranos 36: "Polarität des Lebens" (1967)

The Structure of Selfhood in Zen Buddhism
Eranos 38: "Sinn und Wandlungen des Menschenbildes" (1969)

Sense and Nonsense in Zen Buddhism
Eranos 39: "Mensch und Wort — Man and Speech — L'homme et le verbe" (1970)

The Elimination of Color in Far Eastern Art and Philosophy
Eranos 41: "Die Welt der Farben — The Realms of Colour — Le monde des couleurs" (1972)

The Interior and Exterior in Zen Buddhism
Eranos 42: "Die Welt der Entsprechungen — Correspondences in Man and World — Le monde des correspondances" (1973)

The Temporal and A-Temporal Dimensions of Reality in Confucian Metaphysics
Eranos 43: "Normen im Wandel der Zeit — Norms in a Changing World — Avenir et devenir des normes" (1974)

*The Second Volume

Naive Realism and Confucian Philosophy
Eranos 44: "Die Vielheit der Welten — The Variety of Worlds — La pluralité des mondes" (1975)

The *I Ching* Mandala and Confucian Metaphysics
Eranos 45: "Einheit und Verschiedenheit — Oneness and Variety — L'un et le divers" (1976)

The Field Structure of Time in Zen Buddhism
Eranos 47: "Zeit und Zeitlosigkeit — In Time and Out of Time — Le temps et ses frontières" (1978)

Between Image and No-Image: Far Eastern Ways of Thinking
Eranos 48: "Denken und mythische Bildwelt — Thought and Mythic Images — Image mythique et pensée" (1979)

The Nexus of Ontological Events: A Buddhist View of Reality

Eranos 49: "Grenzen und Begrenzung — Extremes and Borders — Les extrêmes et la limite" (1980)

Celestial Journey: Mythopoesis and Metaphysics

Eranos 51: "Das Spiel der Götter und der Menschen — The Play of Gods and Men — Le jeu des hommes et des dieux" (1982)

Finally, we should like to express our hearty appreciation to James Hillman for kindly contributing the preface of this book and also to the late Rudolf Ritsema of the Eranos Conference for permitting publication of the papers by Izutsu which had appeared in the *Eranos Jahrbuch*. Moreover, we are very grateful to Hajime Okayama of the University of Tokyo and Ryuichi Kogachi of Kyoto University, who were so kind to provide us with valuable advice for editing this book from the viewpoint of Chinese thought and philology. Our thanks are also extended to Sae Omuro of Keio University Press and to Charles Pringle for their kind help in preparing the publication of this book.

Yoshitsugu Sawai

PREFACE

The Eranos Meetings on Lago Maggiore in the very south of Switzerland drew a group of unusual scholars who shared their adventurous research with one another and those who came to mingle and listen each summer for nine days during the latter part of August.

Eleven lectures, two chamber music concerts, lunches and dinners around a great round green table under trees on an elevated terrace at the very edge of the lake. On the terrace nearby, a stone: carved with the motto *genio loci*. It had been placed there by the originator of the idea of the meeting of minds by Olga Froebe Capteyn in the early 1930s.

In the course of time — that is, by the nineteen sixties when Izutsu-sensei joined the circle which has included the most eminent theologians, physicists, and scholars in the humanities — the routine of the conferences had become quite formalized, one might even say, ritualized. The lecturer mounted the podium at precisely nine-thirty in the morning (or four-thirty in the afternoon). No announcements; no introduction. The audience of sixty, seventy, or a hundred or more assembled in straight-back chairs on the cement floor of the hall, or outside on the verandah listening through the large open casement windows.

The lecturer spoke for an hour, left the podium for a half-hour intermission to a quiet solitary retreat. During the retreat, he or she

was fortified with tea or coffee or champagne and a small sandwich of parma ham, and then returned for the concluding second hour. Again, no applause, no questions. The other members of the circle of each year sat alongside the lectern as if a jury of colleagues in closest attention. The eleven speakers varied from year to year according to the overall theme, the availability of the scholars, and the distribution of languages among the eleven: always five in German, three in French and three in English. The two full hours with intermission are less comparable in style with an academic lecture than with a solo concert where the performer holds the stage alone, presenting for the first time in public his most recent opus.

Izutsu-sensei, if I remember correctly, gave his lectures with utmost formal modesty and authority, in traditional dress with a treasured family obi. His voice was quiet, his facial features intensely concentrated, now and then clearing his throat to deliver his thought as if to overcome interior hesitations in achieving the precision that an idea required.

* * *

Many years have passed since those mornings and evenings by the lake. With the passing of years impressions in memory take on forms of their own, perhaps rooted in an actual moment but transformed into a tale. Which is the truth? The moment of thirty and forty years previous in its facticity as it is imagined and that is now completely vanished or the story now being written?

In casting back through memory I find three such moments; their truth seems substantial, not because of their facticity, but because they seem to accord with the essential nature of the person of whom they are told.

Once, I inquired, rather boldly, how long sensei took to write his lectures, since I had labored all summer, more than two months, day in and day out, on my own talk. He indicated that he wrote them more or less quite quickly, not laboriously, but had given thought to them long before he began to write. His preparation began in the

mind. The act then flowed from the preparation. Part of this preparation, he indicated on another occasion, derives from the practice of a discipline. In Izutsu-sensei's case, I believe, it was calligraphy. I believe he said that a traditional discipline was necessary to his thinking, allowing, even fostering, penetration to levels of awareness that come only after assiduous practice of an art.

A second occasion comes to mind when again I had the temerity to ask how it was possible to use abstract philosophical concepts, since the nature of the topics of which he lectured — the Tao, Zen Buddhism, Confucian Ethics, "I Ching" — cautioned against the danger of hypostasizing concepts into hardened metaphysics. His reply was so simple: the concepts must be such that they erase themselves lest they be literalized.

Sitting together at table one evening I said something about students. Izutsu-sensei said he had no students, because if they were good, they did not need to be taught anything, and if they were poor, they could not be taught anything.

The assembly of his lectures in this book ranging through varieties of Asian philosophies was a major offering to the ecumenical spirit of Eranos. The Greek word is primarily translated as "a shared meal to which each contributed his share." Although the word also means a modest collective collation, even a "picnic," eranos can denote a feast and a festival. A further meaning of the Greek is a favor, a service, a kindness that will be reciprocated. Izutsu sensei's lectures through the years incorporate all these meanings. They were offered with modesty. They provided a feast of insights and they served their hearers by enriching their minds and stimulating reciprocal thoughts for their own contributions. The great range of topics and his encompassing comprehension brought a limpid beauty and unbiased justice to each of his themes. Despite the range of these, they represent only a portion of his scope that included Western philosophy, linguistics, epistemology, and Arabic and Persian scholarship.

Over the years I took increasing pleasure arriving at Eranos to find sensei and his charming intelligent wife sharing the picnic. We

arrived from different ends of the earth and with contrasting styles of discourse, and yet met as happy companions. Only after I had visited Japan several times — Nara and Kyoto and countryside in particular, and also Shiraz in Persia — did I come to understand how the garden on Lago Maggiore suited them so well. It was "home ground." The aesthetic particulars of that retreat on the lakeside, the mood of the atmosphere at summer's twilight, its "genius loci" welcomed them, as it invited each of us regardless of origin, to be for a short while here at home.

James Hillman

THE ABSOLUTE AND THE PERFECT MAN IN TAOISM

ERANOS 36
(1967)

I

Introduction

The main problems which I shall attempt to deal with in what follows are indicated by the title: The Absolute and the Perfect Man in Taoism. But the word "Taoism," as it appears in this title, is in reality highly ambiguous because it can refer to a number of different things, or at least to two historical phenomena which must be distinguished from one another. One is the Taoist school of philosophy represented by the two great names: Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ. The other is the popular religious movement which arose in a much later period, the Later Han dynasty. In the former case, the word Taoism will be an English equivalent for the Chinese expression: *tao chia*, i.e., the school of the Way, or *tao tê chia*, i.e., the school of the Way and Virtue. In the second case, Taoism will stand for *tao chiao*, i.e., the teaching of the Tao.

The former concept, that of *tao chia*, arose in the beginning of the Han dynasty, that is, in the first half of the second century B.C. It refers to the school — or more exactly schools (pl.) — of thinkers who claimed Lao-tzŭ as the founder of their school or who were

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The theme of Eranos 36 (1967), that is, the 36th Eranos Conference Yearbook which is the compilation of lectures given at the Eranos Conference in 1967, was "Polarität des Lebens."

considered to have found inspiration in the teaching of Lao-tzŭ. The text of the book called *Tao Tê Ching* was most probably established in its definite form among the people of this school as their basic scripture.

The latter term, *tao chiao*, refers to something quite different from this. It refers to a very vigorous socio-religious movement among the common people which came up to the surface of history in the second century A.D., with a person called Chang Tao Ling, who succeeded in winning the hearts of the people by curing diseases by magico-sorcerous methods and organizing a strong social movement for the relief of the poor and needy in the lower strata of society. This movement rapidly went on assuming the nature of a popular religion among the people and for the people, until in the fifth century it became consolidated in the well-organized form of what we might call the Taoist Church. Taoism in this sense is a religious system consisting of the art of longevity, or the art of attaining to immortality, yoga-practice, exorcism, divination, magic and sorcery. In the nature of the case, it contains a huge amount of fantastic and superstitious elements, but it has also developed a very interesting philosophical world-view based partly on the teaching of Lao-tzŭ whom they deified from the earliest days.[1]

Now what we shall be concerned with in the present paper is not this latter type of Taoism, but the former one. My main purpose is to analyze the major concepts of the first type of Taoism and to bring to light the basic structure of its world-view in terms of the Absolute and the Perfect Man. In order to avoid misunderstanding, I would like to state at the outset that my approach in this particular paper is

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[1]For more details about this second type of Taoism I would refer the reader to an excellent exposition by Henri Maspero in his *Le taoïsme* (*mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la Chine*), Paris 1950, and in the East, among others, to Ninji Ōfuchi: *Dōkyō Shi no Kenkyū* ("Studies in the History of Taoism [*tao chiao*]"), Okayama, Japan, 1964, particularly pp. 1–40.

purely philosophical. Taoism is an extremely complex phenomenon, and it naturally allows of being approached from many different angles. Besides, as I have already suggested, Taoism in the first of the two senses which have just been explained was historically far from being a unity; it comprised a divergence of schools. But since my approach is purely philosophical, I think I am justified in confining my attention to one particular school of Taoism, that of Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ.

I have just used the expression: the school of Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ. But even this "school" was not a unity from the very beginning. It would seem rather that the school of Lao-tzŭ and the school of Chuang-tzŭ developed at first independently of each other. Only in the Former Han dynasty, in the second century B.C., were they united into a kind of unity and began to be felt as one single school of thought. However this may be, it is in the *Huai Nan Tzŭ*[2] of this period that we find for the first time in history Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ put together in the form of Lao-Chuang (school). It is significant that already in the first century B.C., we find the historian Ssŭ Ma Ch'ien in his *Book of History* clearly stating that the philosophy of Chuang-tzŭ "in its essential part can be traced back to the words of Lao-tzŭ," and that his work "consisted in upbraiding the followers of Confucius and illuminating the teaching of Lao-tzŭ."[3] Ever since, this idea has held sway for many centuries as representing the historical truth regarding the relationship between Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ.

Modern philological studies have brought to light that such was not at all the case. Many people today doubt or flatly deny the historical existence of a man called Lao-tzŭ. And even if he did exist, we

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[2]*Huai Nan Tzŭ* is an important document for the history of Chinese thought. It is a book in which a conscious attempt is made to systematize all the major existing schools of thought of the day into a unified world-view with Taoism as its basis. It was written by scholars who had been invited by Liu An, Prince of Huai Nan, to his Court.

[3]Ssŭ Ma Ch'ien: *Shih Chi*, in the section entitled "The Biography of Lao-tzŭ, Chuang-tzŭ, Shên Pu Hai, and Han Fei Tzŭ."

now know that he could not have been the author of the book entitled *Tao Tê Ching* as we know it today. We are not sure even whether the *Tao Tê Ching* preceded the *Book of Chuang-tzŭ* or not. But we do not have to go further into details about this problem, because, for our particular purposes, all this is only a matter of secondary importance.[4] Whether or not there once was a man called Lao-tzŭ, and whether or not he wrote the *Tao Tê Ching*, the thought is there, clearly expressed. And it is the thought, nothing else, that concerns us in this paper.

As regards Chuang-tzŭ, we are fortunately on far more solid ground. He is not a legendary, or semi-legendary, figure like Lao-tzŭ; he *is* a historical person. We know that he did exist in about the middle of the fourth century B.C. It is interesting to know that he was roughly a contemporary of Aristotle. It is more interesting and more important to know that, within China itself, he was a contemporary of three outstanding men: Mêng-tzŭ or Mencius, Ch'ü Yüan of the State Ch'u, and Hui-tzŭ. With all these three, Chuang-tzŭ stood in a very peculiar relation.

Mencius was the greatest representative of the Confucian school in the earliest period of the development of Confucianism. Chuang-tzŭ and Mencius do not seem to have known each other personally. Chuang-tzŭ does not mention Mencius in his book. Nor is any mention made of Chuang-tzŭ in the book of Mencius. But Chuang-tzŭ may be said to have stood in a particular relation with Mencius in that he relentlessly attacked what Confucius and his followers regarded as cardinal virtues, particularly *jên* "humaneness" and *i* "righteousness," and that these two were precisely the highest ethical values which Mencius was so eager to defend.

The second of the above-mentioned three, Ch'ü Yüan, was an outstanding shaman-poet, admittedly the greatest of all in this genre in the history of Chinese literature. Evidently Chuang-tzŭ did not

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[4]With this understanding, I shall in what follows refer to Lao-tzŭ as if he were a historical person who wrote the book *Tao Tê Ching*.

know this poet personally, but in spirit he had much in common with him, for Chuang-tzŭ himself was in a certain sense a philosophizing shaman. His mythopoeic imagery was, I think, of a shamanistic origin. And it is my opinion that his vision of the universe and the underlying ecstatic experience were nothing but a philosophical elaboration of what we might properly call the shamanistic mode of thinking that had long been in the tradition of the ancient Chinese culture.[5]

The third, Hui-tzŭ, was a brilliant dialectician of his time. And Chuang-tzŭ had the closest and most intimate personal relation with him. Hui-tzŭ was the most formidable, that is, the best, opponent of Chuang-tzŭ in the field of logical and conceptual thinking. The two friends seem to have often had animated discussions over philosophical problems. And although Hui-tzŭ, as he appears in the *Book of Chuang-tzŭ*, always ends by being miserably defeated by Chuang-tzŭ, it is undeniable that the latter learnt a good deal from the former. As I shall show later, it is most probable, for instance, that Hui-tzŭ's relativist view, famous as his *fang-shêng* theory, greatly contributed toward the philosophical elaboration of Chuang-tzŭ's thesis of the "equalization of things and values."

Now the *Book of Chuang-tzŭ* which has come down to us is composed of three major parts. The first is called the "Interior Chapters" (*nei p'ien*) consisting of seven chapters. The second is called the "Exterior Chapters" (*wai p'ien*) consisting of fifteen chapters. And the third is called the "Miscellaneous Chapters" (*tsa p'ien*) consisting of eleven chapters. Of these three parts, the most important and interesting from the philosophical standpoint is the first one, representing as it does Chuang-tzŭ's own thought and ideas, and being most probably from his own pen. The Exterior and Miscellaneous Chapters are evidently inferior in style, imagery, and thought. They are mostly

[5]On this point, see my *Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism*, vol. II, Tokyo, 1967, Chap. I and Chap. II.

interpretations and elucidations added to the main text by a number of later followers of Chuang-tzŭ. And since his followers were divided into several schools, each holding fast to its own interpretation, there is no uniformity of thought observable in these two parts. So in quoting from the latter, I shall use in this paper the symbols *Chuang-tzŭ* (E) and *Chuang-tzŭ* (M) in order to distinguish the passages taken from them from those representing the genuine thought of Chuang-tzŭ which we find in the Interior Chapters.

Now that I have given in a very summary way at least the minimum amount of knowledge concerning the historical background of the present study, I shall immediately go into its main subject. My purpose is, to repeat, to analyze the philosophy of the *tao*, that is, to lay bare the basic philosophical structure of the Taoist world-view as represented by Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ.

II

The Confucian Theory of Meaning

In order that we might obtain a clear analytic understanding of the thought of Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ, we have to know before everything else that their philosophizing process is animated by the spirit of conscious antagonism against Confucian philosophy. The main target of its attack and criticism is the essentialism of Confucius. We must begin by explaining this particular point.

The essentialist standpoint of Confucius, as formulated by himself, appears in a very peculiar form which might look at first sight to have nothing to do with philosophical essentialism. I am referring hereby to the famous doctrine of the "rectification of names" (*chêng ming*).

This peculiar form in which his essentialism found its concrete expression may be accounted for as being due to the fact that Confucius was a thinker whose constant preoccupation was the moral reform and regeneration of the society in which he lived. His major

problems were social and ethical problems. And his entire thought was molded and formulated in accordance with this central interest. The thesis of the "rectification of names" is a direct expression of this basic attitude.

However, on a more abstract and philosophical level of thinking, the doctrine of the "rectification of names" turns out to be nothing other than essentialism. Or, to say the same thing in a slightly different way, the "rectification of names" stands on the philosophical basis of essentialism.

This essentialism, in its fundamental structure, is something extremely simple. It is simple because it is a kind of philosophy which is natural and peculiar to our common sense and reason as they work in our daily life. Reason is of such a nature that it cannot exercise its proper function except when it has distinguished between various things and established them as so many independent entities.

In the view of reason, everything is and must be distinguished from others by its own boundary. A horse is a horse, and nothing else. A horse is not and can never be a dog. A dog, likewise, is a dog, and nothing else. It cannot be, it should not be, confused with a cat. And this natural distinction between things owes its existence to the very simple philosophical fact that everything is unalterably fixed by its "essence" or "quiddity." "Essence" or "quiddity" in this sense is that by which a thing is what it is. And it is the most basic function of language to give permanence to the "essences." When, in other words, a "name" becomes assigned to a thing, it takes hold of the "essence" that has been hidden in the thing, fixes it, stabilizes it, and thereby turns the thing into a definite object with a definite boundary surrounding it and preventing it from being confused with others.

The Confucians do not take the naive position that between a thing and its name there is from the very beginning a natural tie. The particular kind of animal which we are now accustomed to calling "cat" could very well have been named "dog." Naming in the last analysis is a matter of convenience and convention. But once

instituted, it should not be altered; it should always and forever be used in such a way that it designates that for which it has been instituted.

The conventional nature of language is brought out with admirable precision by Hsün-tzŭ[6] in the following way:

> No name is naturally appropriate to any object. All naming is done through convention. But once the convention is established and once it has become a generally-accepted custom, the name (thus established) is regarded as the appropriate designation (of the thing) ... and as its real name.

All names are thus by nature conventional. A name is the result of a social act of agreement. But once agreed upon, a name turns into a linguistic custom, and an unalterable relation becomes established between it and the object. The unalterability of the relation is thus partly guaranteed by linguistic custom, but it has a stronger guarantee in the fact that the object designated by the name is ontologically fixed by its "essence." A name is a symbol that has been agreed upon with a view to crystallizing in a material and tangible form the "essence" of an object.

Confucius himself formulates this idea in a peculiar form. Here is an example which might look at the first glance very trivial and insignificant. The word *ku* appearing in the passage originally and properly seems to have meant a drinking goblet with four corners, which was designed to be used in sacrificial ceremonies. But the *ku* in his days was cornerless. Against this fact Confucius bitterly cries out:

> The *ku* has no longer corners. Can such a thing be a *ku?* Can such a thing be a *ku?*[7]

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[6]Hsün-tzŭ (3rd century B.C.) was the greatest champion of Confucianism after the death of Mencius. In Chapter XXXII (entitled "The Rectification of Names") of his Book, he gives a very precise theoretical formulation to the Confucian idea of the rectification of names. All the passages that are quoted in the following are from this chapter.

[7]*Analects*, VI, 23.

Those who are not familiar with the Confucian thesis of the "rectification of names" would find it hard to understand why Confucius bewails with such an exaggerated — so it would seem to them — tragic gesture the fact that the drinking goblet has lost its corners. In the eyes of Confucius, however, this seemingly trivial instance is a matter of grave consequence because it is symptomatic of the moral degradation and intellectual disorder that prevail in society.

In order to bring home the point Confucius wants to make, let us reconsider the above-mentioned passage using another example which will be more familiar to our minds. In place of the *ku*, let us use the concept of "table" as an example. Suppose the word "table" was originally instituted by convention to designate *square* tables, only a square kind. Suppose the same word is now being actually used by the people to designate *round* tables. What would this semantic change mean? From the point of view of Confucius, it would simply mean that language is now being used without any regard to the "essence" of the table. It would mean that between the word and its objective referent there has stealthily crept in a semantic discrepancy.

Let us now transfer the very same situation to the sphere of moral and political life. The grave consequence of this semantic discrepancy would then leap to the eye. The ruler, for instance, claims to be "ruler" without having the necessary qualities that constitute the "essence" of the ruler. The father, having no real qualification for being designated by that term is now called "father." The son who has no filial piety is called "son." And the same is true of all other names, like "brother," "husband," "wife," etc. Many of the so-called "sovereigns," as Hsün-tzŭ says, will be found to be not at all different from "thieves" if we but examine what they actually are doing and how they are actually spending their days. If they are to remain as they are, they should straightforwardly be called "thieves" instead of "princes" and "sovereigns." That would be the proper usage of words!

Confucius observes this kind of semantic discrepancy everywhere in the society of his time. His idea is to reorganize the whole

structure of the society by first "rectifying" the usage of words in such a way that all names should stand for what they are supposed to stand for. The ideal society as he conceives it is one in which only those who are really worthy to be called "princes" should be called "princes," only those who really deserve the appellation "father" should be called "fathers," etc. And everybody would really deserve to be designated by a name when, and only when, he does embody the "essence" which the name has originally been instituted to stand for. This is what is meant by his words:

> Let the ruler be ruler. Let the minister be minister. Let the father be father. And let the son be son.[8]

The discrepancy between the names and the objects to which they are applied is at once the cause and consequence of the moral anarchy that prevails in human relations and the utter disintegration of the social structure which finds its most glaring manifestation in numerous instances of regicide and parricide.

On behalf of his Master, Hsün-tzŭ explains the situation in a theoretical way in the following passage:

> In our days the ideal kings are already gone. The correct usage of names has slackened. All kinds of strange words have arisen. As a result, the relation between names and objects is now in utter confusion, and the distinction between what is right and what is wrong has become obscured. This confusion has affected even the high officials in charge of maintaining law and order and the educated scholars studying the Confucian Scriptures. ...
>
> (The baneful effect of the linguistic confusion here spoken of will be understood in the following way.) The things (that exist in the world) are infinitely variegated. The human minds are in the same way different from each other. Thus, (if the correct relation between the things and their names is not maintained) different minds will understand different things in different ways. As a result, the names and the objects will fall into an irremediable confusion; the valuable and the worthless will no longer be clearly distinguished from each other; and there will be no

[8] *Ibid.*, XII, II.

differentiation made between the same and the different.

If such a situation arises, the minds will not be able to escape the disaster of being constantly misunderstood, and the working of the objective reality will surely suffer from the calamity of being obstructed or ruined.

The analysis of the naming process which Hsün-tzŭ gives in this Chapter is in itself extremely interesting as a theory of meaning. Since, moreover, it affords an excellent insight into the linguistic aspect of Confucian essentialism I shall give here the main points of his argument in a summary form.

The naming process, according to Hsün-tzŭ, begins with the human mind coming into contact with various things through the sense organs.[9] The human mind at this level of cognition begins to perceive similarities and differences among the things. The five senses, each of which has its own peculiar objects, compare the things and find some of them similar to each other and others different from each other.

The second stage is constituted by the activity of a higher function of the mind.[10] At this stage, the differences and similarities which the sense organs have noticed are synthetically and more clearly apprehended. This function of the mind is called by Hsün-tzŭ *ch'êng chih* or "clarifying cognitions."[11]

The sensory impressions convey only the external forms and qualities of things. They do not let us know "what these things are." *What* a thing *is* is apprehended only by the "clarifying cognition." And the latter is basically the "classifying" activity of the mind, which Hsün-tzŭ explains as "referring what the senses have just noticed to what the mind apprehended in its previous experiences." The five senses can note forms and shapes, but they are

[9]Hsün-tzŭ calls them *t'ien kuan*, lit. "Heaven-given organs," i.e., "natural organs."

[10]Which Hsün-tzŭ calls *t'ien chün*, "Heaven-given, or natural, ruler."

[11]The word *ch'êng* originally means water becoming clear and limpid.

unable to classify them. It is only through the classifying activity of the mind that the diverse impressions are brought into the unity of a thing. The "clarifying cognition," in other words, is the activity of the human mind by which it comes to know a thing in terms of "what it really is," that is, in terms of its "essence." The "essence" which defines a thing in this way is called by Hsün-tzŭ *shih*, i.e., reality or actuality.

The third stage is that of naming. When a thing has in this way been recognized in terms of its "essence," one is in a position to assign a name to it.

> Similar things (recognized as such through the above-mentioned classification) are named alike, while different things are named differently ... Things having different "essences" should not be given one and the same name, just as things sharing one and the same "essence" should not be given different names.

Thus the "essence" works as the principle in accordance with which things are given appropriate names. But since "essences" are found as the result of the classifying activity of the human mind, and since classification can be made on varying levels of generalization, the "essences" can also vary among themselves in terms of universality and particularity. This is the reason why we have "universal terms" (*kung ming*)[12] and "particular terms" (*pieh ming*).[13] The most universal term (*ta kung ming*)[14] is "thing" (*wu*).

> Although the ten thousand things[15] are infinitely various, it sometimes occurs that we want to refer to them all as a whole and in general. In such a case we use the word "thing." "Thing" is the highest universal term.
>
> (The process by which we arrive at this highest universal term is as follows.) We push ahead generalization and put (particular terms)

[12]Lit. "common names."
[13]Lit. "differentiating names."
[14]Lit. "great (est) common name."
[15]The "ten thousand things" is a usual expression for "all things that exist in the world." The expression occurs constantly in what follows.

> together into universal terms. Then we go on putting these universal terms into (higher) universals until finally we reach the stage at which we find nothing more universal. And there we stop. (The highest universal is the result of such a process of generalization.)
>
> Sometimes, on the contrary, it happens that we want to refer to the things in a more or less specified way. In such a case we use terms like "bird" and "beast." "Bird" and "beast" are great (i.e., higher) differentiating terms (i.e., particular terms). In this direction we go on differentiating degree after degree until finally we reach the stage at which we cannot differentiate any further. And there we stop.

Thus we see the whole world of existent things being neatly classified into an ontological hierarchy ranging from the highest universal down to the lowest particulars. No one, I think, could help recognizing here an amazing similarity between Hsün-tzŭ and Plato-Aristotle.

Be this as it may, I have gone into the details of Hsün-tzŭ's semantic theory in order to provide a solid and reliable knowledge of the essentialist standpoint of the Confucian school, against the background of which only Taoist anti-essentialism will disclose to our eyes its real significance.

III

The Taoist Theory of Meaning

According to the Confucian thesis which we have analyzed in the preceding chapter, everything is what it really is by dint of its "essence." What is "right" is *essentially* or *by essence* "right." What is "beautiful" is *essentially* "beautiful."

Confucius and his followers take the position that to every name there corresponds an objective and permanent piece of reality — the *shih* of Hsün-tzŭ. The Confucian position in this sense deserves to be called philosophically "realism" as well as "essentialism." Realism in such a context is in the Western tradition of philosophy opposed to nominalism.

The Taoist position which we are going to examine analytically is also an outspoken anti-essentialism and anti-realism. It is, however, important to note that Taoist anti-realism takes on a particular form which turns it into something fundamentally different from nominalism.

Against Confucian realism the Taoists begin by denying the real existence of something solid and permanently fixed which is called "essence." The most beautiful woman in the world, Chuang-tzŭ points out,[16] will surely enchant by her beauty the hearts of all men in the world. For she *is* beautiful to them. And yet, if fish happen to see her, they will simply dive deep into water. Birds will fly up into the sky. And wild animals will run away in all directions. Of these four — man, fish, bird, and wild animal — which one, Chuang-tzŭ asks, knows the real standard of beauty?

What looks beautiful to us, human beings, looks ugly, or even terrifying, to other animals. Contrariwise, what we consider ugly and repulsive seems to strike other animals as very beautiful and attractive. A monkey is attracted by a monkey, a deer by a deer, and a mudfish enjoys being with a mudfish.

Human beings like to eat beef and pork, Chuang-tzŭ continues, deer like to eat grass, centipedes find snakes delicious, and kites and crows enjoy eating mice. Which one of these four knows the real standard of good taste?

This and similar examples which are produced in this and other places of the *Book of Chuang-tzŭ*[17] are designed to show that there is no standard of judgment anywhere in the world which might prove to be of universal validity. And to say this is nothing other than saying that there is no such thing as "essence" anywhere.

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[16] *Chuang-tzŭ*, II, p. 93. In quoting from the *Chuang-tzŭ* in this paper I give page numbers of a recent Peking edition of the *Chuang-tzŭ Chi Shih* by Kuo Ch'ing Fan, 1961.

[17] See for instance (E) XII, p. 453; (E), XVIII, p. 621, etc.

The distinctions which are usually thought to exist between various things are not "essential." If wild animals run away terrified at the sight of a "beautiful" woman instead of being attracted by her, it simply means that a beautiful woman is not beautiful by what the Confucians call *shih* or "essence." There is nothing in the world which is *objectively* and *essentially* beautiful. Likewise there is nothing which is *objectively* and *essentially* ugly. The distinction between "beautiful" and "ugly" is a matter of subjective viewpoints. This naturally leads to a relativist view of reality or ontological relativism. As Lao-tzŭ remarks:

> If all men in the world recognize something beautiful as "beautiful," it is because (there exists something) "ugly." If all men recognize something good as "good," it is because (there exists something) "bad."[18]

Otherwise expressed, something is "beautiful" or "good" only in contrast to something "ugly" or "bad." Conceptually speaking, if the concept of "ugliness" or "badness" did not exist, the concept of "beauty" or "goodness" would never exist. Nothing can be *absolutely* "beautiful" or *absolutely* "ugly." Everything, in short, is relative. The world we live in is a world of relative distinctions and relative antitheses. The majority of men, ignoring this simple fact, often go to the extreme of laying down their lives for upholding what they consider to be "good" or "right." This they do simply because they imagine that what is "good" is by essence "good," and what is "right" is by essence "right."

Referring to *jên* "humaneness" and *i* "righteousness," which the Confucians regard as two of the highest human virtues and for the defense of which they would willingly throw away their lives, Chuang-tzŭ remarks at the end of the passage to which reference has just been made:[19]

> These considerations lead me to conclude that the boundaries

[18] *Tao Tê Ching*, II.
[19] *Op. cit.*, II, p. 93.

between *jên* and *i* and the limits between "right" and "wrong" are also extremely uncertain and confused, so utterly and inextricably confused that we can never know how to discriminate between them.

Let us now turn to the linguistic or semantic aspect of the anti-essentialism of the Taoists and re-examine the whole problem from that point of view. As we have seen above, the Confucian school admits the conventional nature of the name-object relationship. They do not assert that this relationship itself is something essential. But the point they so emphatically make is that this relationship, once established through convention, must thenceforward be kept intact and unaltered. And the unalterability of the name-object relationship is based on the fact that, although on the side of the name there is nothing to make the relationship permanent except social custom, there is, on the side of the object, something which is eternally unalterable, that is, "essence." Against this thesis the Taoists take the position that the name-object relationship is entirely arbitrary and unstable, because there is, neither on the side of the name nor on the side of the object, any fixity and stability.

I shall first explain the Taoist position regarding the lack of essential stability on the side of language. Language, Chuang-tzŭ asserts, is by nature unstable. It is something comparable to wind and waves. He says:[20]

> Language is like wind and waves ... Wind and waves are easily set in motion.

Just as wind and waves are by nature mobile, so words are of such a nature that they continuously move and change. No wonder discrepancies constantly arise between words and the objects they designate. This, however, does not exhaust the nature of language. There is another important and very peculiar feature which characterizes

[20] *Ibid.*, IV, p. 160.

human language and which was left unnoticed by the Confucians. And since they did not notice it they were led to their essentialist position which completely distorts and disfigures the ontological structure of things.

The important feature of human language here spoken of is the essentialist tendency which is naturally inherent in language. Language is by nature so made as to create everywhere distinctions that look as if they were "essential" boundaries between things, while in truth no distinctions, according to Chuang-tzŭ,[21] are real. The Reality as pictured by language is completely disfigured because of the "boundaries" which language creates where there is none. In a passage of *Chuang-tzŭ* (M) we find the following statement:[22]

> As long as language is not used, all things remain in their original Equality (without being marked off by "essential" boundaries). Equality cannot peacefully coexist with language. Nor can language subsist where all things are "equal." Hence I say: "Let there be no words."

What is meant by this statement may be explicated in a more theoretical way as follows. Language has a natural tendency to produce "essences." When a thing is given a particular name, the thing acquires thereby an "essence." Suppose the thing is named *X*. It immediately acquires *X*-ness, that is, the "essence" of being *X*. And since it is now *X* "by essence," it can never be anything other than *X*. A piece of that "vast and limitless field" of Reality is thus arbitrarily cut off therefrom, and is given a rigid and unalterable fixity. As Chuang-tzŭ says:[23]

> The absolute Reality (*tao*) has no "boundaries." Nor has language any

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[21] We shall explain this point presently. All things, in his view, are "equal," there being nothing which is "essentially" distinguishable from others. As Lao-tzŭ says: "How far in reality is the distance between 'good' and 'bad?' ... The Reality is a vast and limitless plain (where nothing whatsoever is marked off by a distinct boundary)" (*op. cit.*, XX).

[22] *Op. cit.* (M), XXVII, p. 979.

[23] *Ibid.*, II, p. 83.

permanence. But (as soon as correspondence is established between the two) there arise real "boundaries."

Thus language fosters and positively supports essentialism. And from the viewpoint of a Chuang-tzŭ, those Confucians who believe that everything is unalterably determined and destined to be what it is by its own natural and "essential" boundary, are simply victims of the illusion caused by the essentialist tendency of language.

Now we turn to the objective side of the matter, that is, the problem of the absence of real and permanent distinctions on the part of the objects to be designated by words.

As we shall see more in detail later, the reality of things as conceived by Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ is based on an extraordinary vision obtained in a peculiar kind of mystical experience. The world of Being as it appears to their spiritual eyes is a vast and boundless space where things exist in an amorphous, dream-like mode of existence, freely merging into one another and being constantly transformed into one another. It is not a usual world where things are clearly distinguishable from one another, each being definitely and unalterably delineated and determined. In this amorphous and dream-like world, nothing is rigidly fixed by the so-called "essence" or "quiddity." Ontological fluidity — that is the most salient feature of this world. This is indeed the most central and basic part of the Taoist ontology. But I shall refrain from going further into this problem at this point. I shall come back to it in a later context and deal with it as a specific topic.

Besides, without going to the metaphysical depth of the Reality which can only be reached through mystical experience, we already know by what we have seen concerning the relativist view of things that the things in the world, even on the level of daily experience, are in a state of fluidity. We have remarked above that "beautiful" and "ugly," "right" and "wrong," etc., are merely relative matters. One and the same thing which a certain person believes to be "right" may very well be "wrong" in the view of some other person. And who

knows? Even one and the same person may suddenly or gradually change his opinion and cease to believe in the thing being "right" and begin to be convinced of its being "wrong." Nothing, in brief, has, except in outward appearance, an unchangeable "essence."

For a proper understanding of the Taoist thought it is very important to notice that this fluid state of things on the level of our daily experience is but a reflection of the metaphysical fluidity of the Reality to which reference has just been made. In any case, in the world-vision of a Chuang-tzŭ everything appears deprived of its solid ontological core which is usually called "essence." And being essence-less, all things are floating, as it were, in a dream-like uncertainty and indetermination.

Not that there are absolutely no "boundaries" in any sense in the world of Being. In a certain sense, there certainly *are* "boundaries." But these "boundaries" themselves are characterized by fluidity. They are changeable; they *are* constantly changing. The primary function of our reason consists in taking hold of these mobile and flowing "boundaries," fixing them, and consolidating them into immovable entities. The result is the coming into existence of clearly delineated and rigidly fixed distinctions. And thus is created in our minds the picture of the so-called "reality." But for the Taoists the so-called "reality" is but a surface reality, an appearance, a phenomenon. It is but an utterly distorted picture of the true Reality which lies hidden in a depth, concealed from the eyes of ordinary men.

Now in this activity of reason, language plays a decisive role. For language, as we have seen, is by nature productive of "essences." Reason cannot properly perform its discriminating function without the help of language.

This "essence"-producing language fixes and stabilizes the ever-flowing "boundaries." A "boundary" once stabilized by the working of language, turns into an "essence." But a "boundary," thus transformed into an "essence," is but a corpse, a fossilized shape devoid of life.

Reason and language in this respect are compared by Chuang-tzŭ

to a man who, with the intention of drawing a circle, actually draws a very imperfect circle which is almost a square.[24]

Thus we are faced with a fundamental dilemma. *Logos* in the sense of both reason and language cannot function where there is no "essence." Reality, on the other hand, is "essence-less"; nothing is fixed by an "essence." Therefore, the true reality of things lies far beyond the reach of *logos*. And yet, without *logos* we can neither think nor talk of anything. And by thinking and talking of things through the exercise of *logos*, we cannot but distort and disfigure their reality.

The only way of escape from this dilemma — if we are not to adopt the above-mentioned principle of "let-there-be-no-words" — is for us to realize, and never lose sight of, the fact that behind and beyond the "essence" there lies hidden an ineffable reality. Everybody knows that a word is a sign or symbol for something meant. But we have to realize that the meaning itself — that is, the "essence" which is evoked by the word — is itself a symbol for something which is properly beyond the reach of *logos*. And that "something ineffable" is the Way or *tao* as it manifests itself in everything. In one of the "Exterior Chapters" of the *Chuang-tzŭ* we find an interesting passage which reads:[25]

> In their search after the Way people[26] set a high value on books. But a book is nothing other than words (put together). Thus (by valuing books) they actually are valuing words. Now what makes a word valuable is the meaning it conveys. Meaning, however, (is not the ultimate thing; it) follows[27] something (more profound). That "something" of which meaning is a sequence is ineffable.
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> People, however, set a high value only upon words, and because of that they transmit books from generation to generation. But however highly people may value words, the latter are in reality not worthy to be valued. That which people consider valuable is not at all valuable.

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[24] *Ibid.*, II, p. 83.
[25] *Ibid.* (E), XIII, pp. 488-489.
[26] The reference is to the Confucians.
[27] i.e., derives from, and indicates.

> (What is really valuable is not to be found in sensible forms.) What is visible is only (physical) forms and colors. What is audible is only words and sounds. Alas, what a pity that people imagine that forms, colors, words, and sounds are good enough to make them reach the reality of the Reality!

No matter how many words we may pile up one upon another, we can never hope to reach the reality of the Reality. For the piling up of "essences" does not make us reach the "essence-less." Thus even the word *tao* itself, which the Taoists constantly use as a linguistic symbol for the Absolute, would simply be a hindrance rather than a real indicator except for those who can see beyond the meaning conveyed by the word "Something" which is not conveyed thereby. This is why Lao-tzŭ emphasizes that the word *tao* is a kind of makeshift, a "forced expression," a "provisional name."[28] It is in this sense that the famous opening sentences of the *Tao Tê Ching* must be understood:

> The "way" which properly deserves to be called "way" is not the real Way. The "name" which properly deserves to be "named" is not the real Name.

The expression "the way which properly deserves to be called way" refers to the ordinary meaning conveyed by the word "way" in usual contexts. Lao-tzŭ means to say that such an ordinary meaning of the word "way" should not be applied to what he himself really means by the same word. "The name which properly deserves to be named is not the real Name," that is to say, no ordinary name with its ordinary meaning fits the Absolute. If the Absolute is to be designated by its real name, it must be designated, paradoxical though it may sound, by the name: Name-less (*wu ming*).

> The Way cannot be heard. The moment it is heard, it ceases to be the

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[28]See for example *Tao Tê Ching*, XXV: "I know not its name. But provisionally I would call it *tao*." See also XXXII: "The *tao* in its absolute reality has no name."

> Way. The Way cannot be seen. The moment it is seen, it ceases to be the Way. The Way cannot be expressed by language. The moment it is expressed by language it ceases to be the Way.
>
> Do you not realize? That which gives forms to forms must itself be formless. (The Way being precisely that Formless) it cannot be designated by any name whatsoever.[29]

As I have repeatedly pointed out, to say that the Absolute defies being designated by any name is the same as to say that the absolute Reality of all things is "essence-less." And since the absolute Reality of things is "essence-less," the things themselves are, in their ultimate ontological state, "essence-less." This is what I have referred to earlier by means of the expression: the fluid state of things.

Nothing, in this view, is distinguished from others by a clear-cut line of demarcation. Life and death, to give an easy example which is constantly used by Chuang-tzŭ,[30] are generally thought to be two entirely different things. The difference between the two is manifested in the most evident way in the common fact that everybody loves life and abhors death. No one confuses life with death. From the point of view of the Taoists, however, such an attitude toward life and death is due to the ignorance that veils the eyes of man from the reality of life and death. Life is *not* what it is by its "essence." Nor is death by "essence" death. Both *look* opposed to each other. But in reality they are but two different phenomenal forms of one and the same creative process of the Way which pervades and runs through the whole universe. In this sense, both are, at a deeper level of existence, one and the same thing. Not only life and death, but all things are one; all things are the Reality itself.

Ordinary people who cannot see things at such a depth, are easily deceived by the phenomenal surface of the things and tend to believe that everything is rigidly and unalterably fixed by its "essence." Among the more sophisticated people, the Taoists find typical representatives

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[29] *Chuang-tzŭ* (E), XXII, p. 757.

[30] See for instance, VI, pp. 267–268.

of this superficial view of things in the Confucians. Confucius and his followers base their moral philosophy precisely on this kind of essentialism. In the Taoist view, Confucian philosophy is an ethical elaboration of ontological essentialism. The cardinal virtues of the Confucians like "humaneness," "righteousness," etc., are but so many artificial articulations, which they, the Confucians, arbitrarily force upon the fluid and amorphous Reality, being deceived by the mistaken view that these articulations are there in the Reality, naturally, essentially.

The Reality itself has no such articulations. But they establish these distinctions where there is none, and fabricate out of them rigid, inflexible, and eternally valid ethical categories by which they intend to regulate human behavior.

In the *Chuang-tzŭ* we often find fictitious dialogues between Confucius and Lao-tzŭ. One of them[31] is particularly interesting in connection with the problem we are now considering.

> Once Confucius went to see Lao-tzŭ and spoke to him of "humaneness" and "righteousness." Lao-tzŭ admonished him in the following way:
>
> If, while winnowing, chaffs get into your eyes, (you become blinded thereby so that) all directions become confused. If mosquitos and gadflies bite your skin, you will be deprived of sleep and rest all the night.
>
> In exactly the same way, "humaneness" and "righteousness" irritate our minds. Nay, no disturbance could be more disastrous than that!
>
> Do not let the people of the world lose their natural simplicity.[32] Then, you yourself would be as free and natural as the wind in all your movements. And you would be able to stand alone, combining in

[31] *Op. cit.* (E), XIV, p. 523.

[32] The original word is *p'u* which means the natural simplicity of uncarved block. It is one of the key-terms of Lao-tzŭ (See *Tao Tê Ching*, XXVIII). Psychologically it means the unperturbed state of mind in which man is completely unified with the Absolute. Ontologically it refers to the ultimate state of "undifferentiation" or "equality," where all things repose in their original unity with the Absolute, where nothing is distinguished and differentiated from others by "essential" boundaries.

yourself all the manifestation of the Way.

Instead of trying to bind up ourselves and others with man-made ethical categories and regulate our behavior through them, we must leave everything as it naturally exists in its natural simplicity. For, as we shall see later, the *wu wei* or Non-Doing must be the highest principle of human behavior, becaucse the Way itself works eternally on this principle.

> Cutting the uncarved block into pieces in order to fabricate vessels and utensils is the crime of the artisan. Damaging the Way and its natural manifestations in order to practice "humaneness" and "righteousness" is the crime of the sacred man.[33]

The ethical idea of the Confucians here so bitterly criticized is, as I have pointed out, directly connected with, and based upon, their essentialist view of Being. Against this the Taoists put forward an anti-essentialist thesis, the semantic aspect of which has been analyzed in the present chapter. The real structure of Taoist anti-essentialism, however, cannot be clarified unless we study also its philosophical or metaphysical aspect. To this side of the problem we shall turn in the following chapter.

IV

The Metaphysical Chaos

Essentialism as exemplified by the Confucian theory of meaning and developed by its exponents into a system of ethical values is a philosophical position which seems to be most natural to the human mind.

The essentialist position on both the level of daily common-sense thinking and that of a higher level of philosophical thinking stands

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[33] *Chuang-tzŭ* (E), IX, p. 336. The "sacred man" here means the ideal man as conceived by the Confucians, not the "sacred man" of Lao-tzŭ.

on the view that all things are endowed with "essences," each of the ten thousand things being clearly and definitely marked off from all others by its "essence." These "essences" are crystallized by concepts which, again, are solidified by linguistic signs or "names." And philosophical thinking is largely a matter of the reason manipulating these concepts. Thus is created in our minds a picture of the so-called "reality" as something solid and unchangeable consisting of an infinite number of things which are "essentially" what they actually are. And this picture of the world of Being is considered by the exponents of essentialism to be the true and ultimate picture of reality.

Against this the Taoists assert that this is not the only and ultimate picture of reality. There is, they assert, a higher ontological stage at which these "essences" lose their seeming solidity, become liquefied, and finally even annihilated. On this higher level, everything ceases to be unalterably fixed and stabilized by its hard and solid ontological core which is called "essence." All things become deprived of their "essences" and, being liquefied, flow into a vast and limitless ocean of "undifferentiation." There is no longer here any clear-cut line of demarcation observable between, say, a man and a horse, or between the universe and a finger. Everything is still, in a certain sense, itself, but it is, at the same time, countless other things. Finger, for instance, *is* a finger. But being deprived of its "essence," it is, at the same time, *not* necessarily a finger; it can be any other thing. Nor is a horse unalterably a horse. Thus on this ontological level, we can freely say that the whole universe is a finger, or that the whole universe is a horse.

> Heaven and Earth[34] are a finger. The ten thousand things are a horse.[35]

There being no "essences" in this level, all things interpenetrate each other without any obstruction, and transform themselves into one another endlessly. And since "essential" distinctions are eliminated, all

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[34]i.e., the whole universe.

[35]*Chuang-tzŭ*, II, p. 66.

things exist here as an undifferentiated whole.

Not that the Taoists deny the existence of the ontological level of distinctions, at which each of the existent things is just what it is, and nothing else, being solidly established on its "essence." The point they insist on making is that this is but the phenomenal surface of the Reality. Essentialism is valid only on this surface level, which they regard as the ontological level of the "ten thousand things," that is, the level of Multiplicity. But behind and beyond the level of Multiplicity the Taoists see another ontological level, that of Unity, at which all things cease to be "things" and, interpenetrating each other and intermingling with each other, ultimately go back to their original metaphysical Ground.

Taking "life" and "death" as an example of "opposites" standing against each other in an unalterable way on the level of Multiplicity, and contrasting this situation with the state of affairs on the level of Unity, one of the writers of the *Chuang-tzŭ* (E) explains this point in the following way:

> From the viewpoint of "life," "death" cannot be identified with "life." And from the viewpoint of "death," "life" cannot be identified with "death." Do "life" and "death" depend upon each other?[36] Each of them is a self-subsistent unity.
>
> However, there is Something whose existence precedes even Heaven and Earth.[37] Can it be a "thing"? (No, it cannot be a "thing" because it is that which gives thing-ness to all "things"). That which makes all "things" what they are *qua* "things" cannot be itself a "thing." Any particular "thing" that comes into being cannot precede other "things" (in an absolute way). For (on the level of "things," however far we may trace back the chain of "things") there still are found preceding "things." And the preceding "things" are still found to be preceded by other "things."

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[36]As the immediately following sentence clarifies, this means that on the level of Multiplicity, "life" is "life" by itself — *essentially* we might say — and "death" is "death" by itself.

[37]This refers to the level of Unity, the Absolute or the Way. "Heaven and Earth" means the world of Multiplicity.

> There is no ultimate end to this chain of "things." (But this infinite chain of "things" is absolutely preceded by Something which is itself not a "thing").[38]

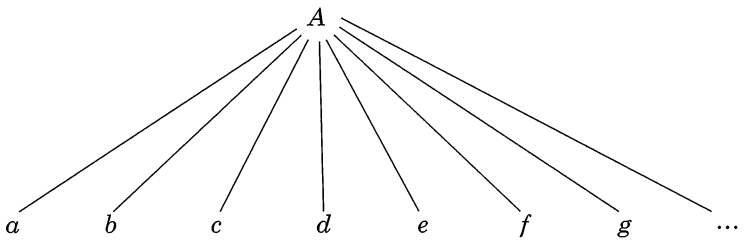
Thus on the level of Multiplicity there are an infinity of things each of which, considered in itself and on this particular level, is an independent, self-subsistent entity clearly marked off from all others, as "life" is distinguished from "death" and "death" from "life." But the whole of these infinitely variegated things is preceded, i.e., presided over, by Something which itself is not a member of this whole, which, in other words, transcends them all. The ontological level of this transcendent Something is the ontological level of Unity.

It is of utmost importance to remark that this Something — which is nothing other than the Way — is emphatically stated not to belong to the category of "things." Since it is not a "thing," there can be no real opposition between it and the "things." Thus, although the level of Multiplicity and that of Unity are *conceptually* to be distinguished from each other, the relation between the two is not one of real distinction or separation. In reality both are but two different aspects of one and the same Reality. This latter, when looked at "from below," so to speak, manifests itself as myriads of different "things," while, looked at "from above," it shows itself as the unique metaphysical Ground of all these "things," in which they, being deprived of their "essential" distinctions, are fused into their original undifferentiation. This is clearly stated in the following passage from the *Chuang-tzŭ*.[39]

> (Since) that which gives thing-ness to "things" (is not itself a "thing"), it is not separated by a "boundary" from the "things." Between the "things" themselves, however, there *are* "boundaries" separating one from another. This latter situation is what is referred to by the expression: "the distinctions between the things." Thus (the Way) which in itself has no "boundary" appears as having "boundaries" (if we look at it on the level of the "things"), just as the ("things" that are separated from each other

[38] *Op. cit.* (E), XXII, p. 763.
[39] *Ibid.* (E), XXII, p. 752.

by) "boundaries" appear as having no "boundaries" (if we look at them from the viewpoint of the Absolute Way).



The situation may be clarified by means of a simple diagram. In this diagram, *A* represents the Way in its original absoluteness. This is the ontological level of Unity. And *a,b,c,d,e,* etc., represent the ten thousand things. This is the level of Multiplicity. So long as we remain on this latter level, and so long as we observe the "things" exclusively on this level, we must admit that each of them is in itself a self-subsistent entity having its own "boundary" and being distinguished from the rest. In this situation, *a*, for example, is "by essence" *a*; it can never be confused with *b*, while *b*, on its part, is exclusively *b*, nothing else. This is the schematic picture of the so-called "reality" which we encounter in our daily experience.

However, the picture is bound to change radically the moment we correlate this ontological level with the higher level of Unity and refer *a,b,c,d,* etc., back to their common metaphysical Ground, *A*. Then we see that the distinctions we have established between them are not at all absolute as we have first imagined. The "essences" become — to repeat the expression which I have used before — liquefied. Everything loses its solid contour, its "essence" being liquefied. The distinctions between the "things" become dim, obscure, and confused, if not completely annihilated. The "thing" called *a* is no longer solidly or exclusively *a*; it can as well be *b* or *c* or, indeed, anything else. For in reference to *A*, *a* is, after all, the same as *b,c,d,* etc. All distinctions between them turn out to be relative. This is the ontological basis of the relativist view of things to which reference was

made in the preceding chapter. One has to adopt relativism because in the light of what we have just seen the so-called opposites are no longer opposites. "Beautiful" and "ugly," "good" and "bad," "right" and "wrong" — these and countless other opposites are real opposites only to those who cannot see things except on the level of Multiplicity.

And this ontological situation in which all things have been brought back to their original undifferentiation is what Chuang-tzŭ calls "chaos" (*hun tun*).

The concept or image of the Chaos is, I believe, of a shamanistic origin. It belongs, in its historical origin, to the cycle of shamanistic myths. We find the Chaos in a book called *Shan Hai Ching*, which describes in detail the mythical monsters supposed to live in the mountains and seas, in the form of a strange monster-bird whose face has no distinguishable features.[40] And in the cosmogonical myth of ancient China as recorded in the above-mentioned *Huai Nan Tzŭ* for example, the same Chaos is represented as a primeval state of Being which preceded the birth of Heaven and Earth — "a state of formless fluidity: nothing stable, nothing definite."[41]

With Chuang-tzŭ, this Chaos, as we have just seen, is elevated and elaborated into an ontological state, a dream-like mode of existence, in which all things, liberated from their watertight compartments, are fused together into an amorphous whole. This ontological equalization of all things is called by Chuang-tzŭ also "heavenly levelling" (*t'ien ni*), "heavenly equalization" (*t'ien chün*), etc.[42] In order to see the true reality of things, he says, we have to harmonize the endless oppositions and distinctions by the "heavenly equalization" and bring

[40]For details see my *Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism*, Chap. II.

[41]*Ibid.* See also *Chuang-tzŭ*, (M), XXVII, p. 947, p. 950.

[42]*Ibid.*, II, p. 70; (M), XXIII, p. 793. In the "Exterior Chapters" of *Chuang-tzŭ* we also find expressions like *hun mang* "vast and indistinct confusion," *mang wu* "vast obscurity" meaning exactly the same ontological situation.

them all back to the state of "chaotic Unity."

It is very important to remark that, like many of the key-terms of Chuang-tzŭ, the word Chaos must be understood in reference to its two aspects: subjective and objective, or psychological and ontological. Moreover, these two aspects are most closely related with each other. Otherwise expressed, the ontological Chaos cannot be realized unless one makes one's own mind itself "chaotic." The equalization of all things, or "heavenly equalization" is not a mere matter of taking an intellectual position. It is basically a matter of metaphysical intuition which the Taoists call "illumination" (*ming*). The structure of this illuminative intuition will be analyzed in the following chapter. Here we have to continue our analysis of the objective aspect of the Chaos.

The ontological level of Multiplicity is the level of Being at which the human mind performs its normal function. It is the basis of the commonsense vision of the world of Being. And anybody who is endowed with the normal faculty of sense perception and normal reason can and does naturally perceive the things in this way. The level of Unity, on the contrary, is not within our daily experience. This depth of Being is, as I have just remarked, perceived only through a particular kind of ecstatic intuition. And this kind of intuition or spiritual illumination is an "abnormal" experience. It is not for everybody to enjoy, even if he wants to do so.

This would seem to mean that the ontological Chaos escapes the grasp of the ordinary human mind except as an intellectual, theoretical thesis. We can understand the thesis intellectually, but we cannot personally and intimately experience it on the level of our daily life. But unless we experience it, that is, unless we see it from the inside, the Chaos does not disclose to our eyes its real significance.

There is, however, one small place even within the sphere of ordinary experience, where we can catch a passing glimpse of the Chaos. And that is the world of dreams. In order to give, at least, an idea as to what kind of experience it is to see things in their original

"essence-less" state, Chuang-tzŭ often has recourse to dream-symbols. The story of Chuang-tzŭ himself being transformed into a butterfly is very famous.[43] Here I shall give in translation two other passages from the same book.

> A man may enjoy drinking wine in a dream, but weep and wail in the morning (when he awakes). A man may weep in a (sad) dream, but when the morning comes he may go joyously on hunting.
>
> While a man is dreaming he is not aware that he is dreaming. He even tries (in his dream) to interpret his dream. Only after he awakes from sleep does he realize that all that was but a dream.
>
> Likewise, only when one experiences a Great Awakening (*ta chüeh*) does one realize that all this (i.e., what he has actually been experiencing in this life) has been but a Big Dream (*ta mêng*). But the stupid imagine that they are awake. Deceived by their petty intelligence, they consider themselves smart enough to distinguish what is noble from what is base.[44] How deep-rooted and irremediable their stupidity is!
>
> In reality, however, both I and you are a Dream. Nay, the very fact that I am telling you that you are dreaming is itself a Dream.[45]

And to this Chuang-tzŭ adds that the truth of these words will be understood only by a perfect Man who is capable of penetrating the mystery of Being; to all others they will simply sound as useless sophistry or mystification designed to shock the innocent minds.

Chuang-tzŭ repeats exactly the same idea in the following passage:[46]

> Suppose you dream that you are a bird. (In that state) you soar up into the sky.
>
> Suppose you dream that you are a fish. You do dive deep into the pool.
>
> (While you are actually experiencing all this in your dream, what you do experience *is* your "reality.")

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[43] *Op. cit.*, II, p. 112.

[44] This is an ironical reference to the semantic theory of the Confucians, which we have examined in Chap. II (see p. 387).

[45] *Op. cit.*, II, p. 104.

[46] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 275.

> In the light of this fact, nobody can be sure whether you and I, who are actually engaged in conversation, are awake or just dreaming.

Not only does this nullify the distinction between Me and Thee, but it renders my own "ego" groundless and very doubtful. My own "ego," which Descartes will establish much later as the only absolutely indubitable entity even when I doubt the existence of everything else, is thus deprived at one stroke of its solid core of existence, and becomes transformed into something dream-like and unreal. "How do I know for sure," Chuang-tzŭ asks, "that this 'I' which I consider as 'I' is really my 'I'?"[47] And as my "ego" loses its solidity of existence, all other things which I perceive lose their solidity and fixity, for the "ego" is the central point of co-ordination for all other things.

In dreams, the sharp edges of "essential" distinctions which characterize the things are softened down, and pictures become blurred and confused. Cut off from the solid ground of the so-called "reality," all things become soft and floating. And yet, for the man who is asleep and dreaming, this precisely *is* the "reality." When he awakes and looks around, he finds himself in quite a different situation. Is this different situation really the "reality"? The dream-experience would seem to suggest that this is very doubtful. It may well be that he is just dreaming that he has just waked up and come back to the world of "reality."

All this is but a symbolic presentation of the problem. It is not a direct description of the ontological Chaos itself. But dream-experience is here presented in such a way as to convey the impression, the real feel, of the Chaos. Even those who have never previously experienced the metaphysical illumination are given thereby a key with which to open the closed door of mystery, and become prepared at least to listen with a little deeper understanding to what Chuang-tzŭ is going to say about the Chaos.

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[47] *Ibid.*

Now the ontological Chaos is described by Chuang-tzŭ in two different ways. That is to say, the Chaos as understood by Chuang-tzŭ has two different aspects: one dynamic or temporal, and the other static or supra-temporal. Let me begin by explaining the former aspect.

The Chaos in its dynamic and temporal aspect manifests itself as an ontological process which Chuang-tzŭ calls the "transmutation of things" (*wu hua*). The Transmutation of things is a process by which all things transform themselves into one another in the order of successive units of time. A thing, say *a*, comes into being, subsists for some time as *a* until, when the "time" which has naturally been assigned to it arrives, it ceases to be *a* and becomes transmuted or transformed into something else, say *b*. Chuang-tzŭ sees in the temporal succession of "life" and "death" a typical example of the Transmutation here spoken of.

It is to be remarked that this view of the Chaos arises when the observer first places himself on the level of Multiplicity, and then looks at the various things as they exist on this level in reference to the level of Unity. As I have previously explained, on the level of Multiplicity everything is distinguished from others by its own ontological boundary. The thing *a* is *a*, and nothing else. As long as it remains *a*, it maintains its "essence." But since, in reference to the level of Unity, it is in reality "essence-less," there is no difficulty, there is nothing unnatural, in its being transformed into *b*. In this case, however, the Transmutation occurs in the form of a temporal process. In other words, *a* "becomes" *b*, when the time arrives.

To say that *a*, in reference to the level of Unity, is "essence-less" is the same as to say that *a* is a particular phenomenal form assumed by the absolute Reality which the Taoists provisionally call the Way. Thus the thing *a* "becoming" *b* simply means that the absolute and unique Reality which continues to manifest itself for some time in the phenomenal form of *a*, divests itself of this particular form at a certain moment and assumes a different phenomenal form *b*. And the absolute Reality goes on manifesting itself in this way in

infinitely variegated phenomenal forms.

Moreover, since the absolute Reality itself is eternal in the sense of having neither beginning nor end, this process of the universal Transmutation of things evolving in time cannot but depict an eternally revolving circle, of which no one knows the beginning and end. The whole process, as Chuang-tzŭ says,[48] is constituted by "infinitely recurrent waves of ending and beginning, and everything goes on revolving in a circle, of which there is neither the real beginning-point nor the ultimate ending-point." Everything in this cosmic movement is a middle stage in the circle. And all things are particular phenomenal forms of the absolute Reality. When the time comes, these particular phenomenal forms disappear from the circle one by one only to reappear later as entirely different phenomenal forms. But throughout this whole process, the circle itself, that is, the Reality itself, remains always there, unchanged and eternally one. This is the temporal aspect of the "ontological fluidity" of which mention was made earlier.

Now we turn to the supra-temporal or a-temporal aspect of the Chaos. As we have seen, the temporal aspect of the Chaos comes to the fore when we look at the world of Being on the basis of what we actually observe on the level of Multiplicity. The supra-temporal or a-temporal aspect of the Chaos, on the contrary, dominates our view when we reverse the order and approach the same world of Being from the standpoint of the metaphysical Unity.

In the former case, what is actually observed is a free temporal transformation of things one into another. The basic formula expressing this situation is: *a* "becomes" *b*. As long as we look at them exclusively on the level of Multiplicity, *a* and *b* are distinctly different from each other. But in reference to the level of Unity, which is the common ontological Ground of both, the distinction between *a* and

[48] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 268.

b becomes blurred and vague. That is to say, each of them appears deprived of its "essence." And being properly "essence-less," they freely change into each other and into countless other things. The whole of these "essence-less" things changing into one another, appearing, disappearing, and reappearing in infinitely various and variegated forms constitutes the temporal aspect of the ontological Chaos.

From the a-temporal point of view, there is no question of *a* "becoming" *b*, because *a*, by the very fact that it is *a*, is already *b*. Here it is not the case that *a* ceases to be *a* and becomes transformed into *b*. From the very beginning, *a* is *b*, and *b* is *a*. Or, for that matter, anything is, from the very beginning, anything else. There is, properly speaking, absolutely no distinction whatsoever between things.

However, the picture becomes a little complicated by our taking into consideration the level of Multiplicity. Just as, in the temporal view of the matter, we start from the diversity of things on the level of Multiplicity and then refer them back to their original Unity, here again we have to start from the level of Unity and correlate it with the level of Multiplicity. Otherwise, we would not be able to have an integral view of the world of Being. But the moment we begin to examine the structure of the Unity in terms of the various phenomenal forms into which it diversifies itself, we cannot help observing a special kind of ontological tension arising in the world of Being.

The absolute Reality, the Way, is one, absolutely one. But it is not a static, but a dynamic Unity. It is, so to speak, a dynamic balance between "unification" and "diversification." It is a Unity of Multiplicity, and Multiplicity of Unity. As Chuang-tsŭ says:[49]

> If looked at from the viewpoint of "differentiation," even liver and gall (which are often used as an example of two things that are almost the same) are as different and as far apart as a country in the farthest North and a country in the farthest South.
>
> However, looked at from the viewpoint of "unification," all things are

[49] *Ibid.*, V, p. 190.

one and the same.

The expression: "all things are one and the same," forms the central point of this thesis. All things are "one," but the Unity is a unity formed by an infinity of divergent things which, in the state of "essence-less" fluidity interpenetrate each other and are fused into an undifferentiated whole. We can describe the same situation from the reverse side by saying that the ultimate Reality is a Unity containing in itself the possibility of an endless diversification and differentiation.

The ontological tension which is thus created shows itself in the most striking way in cases in which the "differentiation" here in question takes on the form of "opposition." The metaphysical Unity of the Absolute appears in such cases as *coincidentia oppositorum.*

The absolute One, in the state of the "heavenly equalization," equalizes in itself all oppositions and contradictions. In this state, the smallest thing is at the same time the biggest, and the shortest unit of time is equal to eternity. The state of affairs which is observable here lies beyond the grasp of common sense and reason. From the viewpoint of the latter, the tip of a hair is an instance of small things, while a big mountain is an instance of big things. A moment is the shortest unit of time, while eternity is the longest duration of time. But this common-sense picture of things radically changes and even becomes completely meaningless when we place ourselves in the position of the "heavenly equalization." As Chuang-tzŭ says:[50]

> There is in the world nothing bigger than the tip of a hair of an animal in autumn, while Mount T'ai is extremely small.
>
> A child who dies before becoming of age may be said to have lived longer than anybody else, while a man who lived 800 years may be said to have died young.
>
> Heaven and Earth endure for the same length of time as I do (i.e., the eternal duration of the universe is equivalent to the momentary duration

[50] *Ibid.*, II, p. 79. For a more detailed and more theoretical explanation of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, see (E), XVIII, pp. 568–575.

of my individual existence in this world).

And the ten thousand things are exactly the same as my own self.

The gist of this argument is that there is a certain ontological stage at which all distinctions, differences, and oppositions lose significance. They are significant and meaningful only on the level of our daily experience, from the point of view of the "things."

The following words are said in answer to the question: "Are the distinctions between 'valuable' and 'worthless' inherent in the things themselves? Or, are they all forced upon the things from the outside? How are 'big' and 'small' differentiated from each other?"

> From the point of view of the Way, things are neither "valuable" nor "worthless." But (the distinction comes into being) from the point of view of the things themselves, each regarding itself as "valuable" and despising others.
>
> However, with regard to the ordinary people, (even this does not hold true, for in their view) the distinction between "valuable" and "worthless" does not depend upon the things themselves; (the distinction is made by more external affairs, like social rank, birth, etc.).
>
> Even if we look at the matter from the point of view of "differentiation" (on the level of Multiplicity), (careful consideration will make us realize that such distinctions have no real basis.) Everything (for instance) can be judged to be "big" in comparison with other things that are smaller than itself, so that there is nothing at all in the world that is not "big." Likewise, everything can be judged to be "small" in comparison with other things that are bigger than itself, so that there is nothing in the world that is not "small." Thus we have to conclude that Heaven and Earth are the same in size with a grain of rice and that a tip of hair is the same in size with a mountain. This clarifies the nature of the distinction (between "big" and "small").[51]

If, even on the level of Multiplicity, all distinctions and oppositions are thus of a relative nature, how much more should this be the case if we look at them from the point of view of the level of Unity? All distinctions and oppositions on this level of Being lose their reality

[51] *Ibid.* (E), XVII, p. 577.

— even that of relativity — and become "equalized" with each other in their original "undifferentiation."

But precisely because of this, the Way deserves to be considered "big" — not, of course, in such a relative sense as has just been explained, but in an absolute sense. The Way is absolutely "big" in that it contains in a state of metaphysical Harmony all differences and distinctions.

> The Way covers and sustains the ten thousand things. How limitlessly wide and big it is! ... It is big in the sense that it reduces all that are not the same to the state of sameness. ...
>
> The ten thousand things are one single body. (Even such extreme opposites as) "life" and "death" are one and the same thing.[52]

All things are one in the ontological Chaos — that is the very gist of the theory of the Chaos considered in its a-temporal aspect.

Thus from both the temporal and a-temporal points of view, the Way or the absolute Reality is found to be an all-equalizing dynamic Unity. This, however, is not the ultimate stage of Taoist ontology. In order to reach the ultimate depth of the Way we have to push a step further our analysis. This will be done in the remaining two chapters.

But before we proceed further, and before bringing the present chapter to a close, I would like to discuss briefly the philosophical position of relativism, to which reference has frequently been made in the preceding. The discussion of this problem in the present context will provide an appropriate introduction to the next chapter.

At the time of Chuang-tzŭ, a kind of philosophical relativism was put forward by his friend Hui-tzŭ, the Dialectician. His thesis was known as the *Fang Shêng*[53] theory, and seems to have been greatly in vogue among those who were interested in this type of thinking.

It is, in brief, a theory of "mutual dependence" or the relativity of all things. In order that there be "life" there must be "death," and in

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[52] *Ibid.* (E), XII, pp. 406–407.

[53] More exactly, *Fang-Shêng-Fang-Ssŭ* theory.

order that there be "death" there must be "life." It is formulated also as: *That* comes out of *This*, and *This* depends upon *That*.[54] "Good" cannot exist unless there be "bad"; "beautiful" is inconceivable without there being "ugly," etc., and *vice versa*. Examples may be multiplied indefinitely, because everything, without exception, is what it is in contrast to, and in association with, its opposite.

On the face of it, this relativist view of things would seem to have nothing wrong about it from the standpoint of Chuang-tzŭ. As a *theory*, Chuang-tzŭ and Lao-tzŭ, as we have seen, assert exactly the same thing.

Further, this relativism easily and naturally leads to the thesis that all differences and distinctions are but relative, and that, therefore, all things are ultimately one and the same. This, again, is exactly what Chuang-tzŭ says about the a-temporal aspect of the Chaos.

The position of Hui-tzŭ is given in a summary form in the last chapter of the Book of *Chuang-tzŭ* (M). It runs as follows:[55]

> That which has no thickness cannot be heaped up; and yet (in comparison with the extreme limit of smallness) it is as big as 1,000 miles. Heaven (in reference to an infinite height) is as low as the earth. And a mountain is as level as a marsh.
>
> The sun in the meridian is already declining (toward the West, because when we think of the sun in that position, it is already in the next). (And for a similar reason, i.e., because of the unreality of time) a thing being born is the same as a thing dying. ...
>
> If you regard all things with a universal love (all distinctions disappear from your eyes), and the whole world turns out to be one single body.

Chuang-tzŭ's basic thesis that all things are, in the Chaos, one, and that there being no "essential" distinctions between things, a thing, *a*, is at the same time another thing, *b* — this thesis is formally the same as the theory of undifferentiation put forward by Kung Sun Lung, the Sophist, which is summarized in the famous dictum: "A dog can

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[54] *Chuang-tzŭ*, II, p. 66.

[55] *Ibid.* (M), XXXIII, p. 1102.

very well be regarded as a sheep."[56]

The outward resemblance is perfect. In reality, however a wide chasm divides the two positions. The relativism of the logicians represents nothing more than an intellectual position. Their "undifferentiation" is a rational "undifferentiation" arrived at through a logical process of reasoning. Their thesis, in other words, is not backed by an illuminative intuition of the Reality. As I have indicated at the outset of this chapter, the ontological Chaos does not reveal its secret except to those who have in their minds a subjective Chaos, that is, those who — as Lao-tzŭ puts it — have "chaotified"[57] their own minds. The "chaotified" mind is a mind which has completely ceased to exercise its discriminating and distinguishing function, a mind which has transcended all distinctions and oppositions. And such a state of the mind is the result of an ecstatic experience in which the mind loses the consciousness of everything, including itself.

The idea of the universal "undifferentiation," unless it be based on such an experience, is but a *concept*, a mere rational form. And as a concept, it stands on the same level as all other ordinary concepts. No matter how closely it may resemble Taoist relativism, it "does not hit the mark."

> Hui-tzŭ has produced a number of ingenious ideas. And his writings would fill five carts. But the teaching lacks uniformity, and his words do not hit the mark (i.e., do not go to the reality of things).[58]

The psychological aspect of the Chaos will form the main topic of the following chapter.

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[56] *Ibid.* (M), XXXIII, p. 1106.
[57] *Tao Tê Ching*, XLIX.
[58] *Chuang-tzŭ* (M), XXXIII, p. 1102.

V

Ecstasy and the Perfect Man

The level of Multiplicity constitutes the world of the so-called "reality." So long as man remains confined in this world observing the things as they exist on the level of Multiplicity, reason can play a leading role.

With regard to the level of Unity, however, the human reason is but "a frog living in a shallow well."[59] And its activity is comparable to "peeping at the sky through a narrow tube, or indicating the earth with the point of an awl."[60] In order to jump out of the well and see the boundless expanse of Heaven and Earth, one must have recourse to a totally different function of the mind, and through it have a totally different kind of experience. The extraordinary experience which one thus undergoes is called *ming*, "illumination."

> Thus it comes about that the Sacred Man[61] does not base his view of things (on the level of Multiplicity), but illuminates them (i.e., understands them through "illumination") in the light of Heaven (i.e., the level of Unity, or the Way). ...
>
> (Viewed from such a standpoint) there is no longer absolutely any distinction between This and That. And this stage at which each of That and This has lost its companion to stand opposed to — this stage is to be considered the very Hinge of the Way. ... This is why I assert that nothing can be better than "illumination."[62]

The importance of "illumination" may thus be obvious from the viewpoint of the Perfect Man. But the problem which naturally arises is: How can man hope to experience it? Is it at all possible for everybody to experience it? The answer, unfortunately, is in the negative.

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[59] *Chuang-tzŭ* (E), XVII, p. 598.
[60] *Ibid.* (E), XVII, p. 601.
[61] As is obvious, the "sacred man" is one of the Taoist expressions for the concept of the Ideal Man.
[62] *Op. cit.*, II, p. 66.

For the majority of men it is impossible to actually experience it. And that is because most men are born spiritually blind.

> The blind cannot enjoy the sight of beautiful colors and patterns. The deaf cannot enjoy the sound of bells and drums.
>
> But do you think that blindness and deafness are confined to the bodily organs? No, they are found also in the domain of cognition.[63]

There are people who, though physically alive, are spiritually dead.[64] "Nothing is more deplorable than to have a dead mind."[65] Yet it is undeniably true that the multitude of men are of that kind.

> There are so many people who have heads and feet, but have neither minds nor (spiritual) ears.[66]

The door of "illumination" is in this sense open exclusively to him who, as Chuang-tzŭ puts it, possesses a "natural potentiality"[67] to be a Perfect Man. With this understanding, we shall try to clarify in what follows the inner structure of this experience.

Let us, first, reflect upon what is meant by Chuang-tzŭ when he says that most men have almost no access to the experience of "illumination." Why is it so difficult for ordinary men to see things in the state of the Chaos? According to the Taoists, it is because of the "ego" depriving man of the absolute spiritual freedom with which alone he can attain to the level of the aforementioned "heavenly equalization." The subjective state of being "ego-less" is closely correlated with the objective "equalization" on the part of the things. Speaking of this correlation one of the writers of the "Exterior Chapters" of the *Chuang-tzŭ* remarks:

> (The Perfect Man) is completely unified with the Great Sameness (*ta t'ung*, i.e., "heavenly equalization"). Nay, he *is* the Great Sameness itself

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[63] *Ibid.*, I, p. 30.
[64] *Ibid.* (E), XIX, p. 630.
[65] *Ibid.* (E), XXI, p. 707.
[66] *Ibid.* (E), XXII, p. 427.
[67] *Shêng jên chih ts'ai, ibid.*, VI, p. 252.

> because he has no "ego" (*chi*) of his own. Since he is "ego-less," how could he conceivably hold fast to the level of Being (*yu*, i.e., the ontological level at which things are different from, and opposed to, each other)? Having the eyes fixed upon the level of Being has been exemplified by the (so-called) great men of the past. Those, on the contrary, whose eyes are turned toward the level of Non-Being (*wu*, i.e., the ontological level at which all things lose their distinctions and become fused into a great "undifferentiation") are the Friends of Heaven and Earth.[68]

The "ego" is the very basis of the self-subsistence of man, the core of his individual existence. It is the central point of co-ordination, at which all the disparate elements of his personality, physical and mental, are united. And around this existential axis all things in the external world find their proper places. The "ego," otherwise expressed, establishes them as so many different and distinguishable things.

It is characteristic of the "ego" that it is in constant movement. And this movement of the human mind is characterized by its centrifugal tendency. Driven by its natural irresistible desire to know and to possess things, the mind goes out of itself in pursuit of external objects, in response to the myriad impressions coming from outside to attract its attention and to rouse its curiosity. Even when the body sits still, the mind is running about in all directions. This psychological state is called by Chuang-tzŭ "sitting-galloping" (*tso ch'ih*).[69]

The "ego," when consolidated, becomes what Chuang-tzŭ calls the "finished mind" (*ch'êng hsin*)[70] corresponding to what Lao-tzŭ calls the "fixed mind" (*ch'ang hsin*).[71] The "finished mind" or "fixed mind" exercises a tyrannical sway over man. It forces him to distinguish and discriminate between things, classify them, and, as a result, establish "good" and "bad," "right" and "wrong," etc., as eternal and unchangeable categories based on "essential" differences. Man

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[68] *Ibid.* (E), XI, p. 395.
[69] *Ibid.*, IV, p. 150.
[70] *Ibid.*, II, p. 56.
[71] *Tao Tê Ching*, XLIX.

becomes in this way ever more alienated from the original Unity of all things. Men in such a state are to be regarded as "the people like the waves agitated by the wind."[72] They are also called "men turned upside-down"[73] because "they lose their real self in the things and lose their real nature in the world of vulgarity."

The real "self" (*chi*) and the real "nature" (*hsing*) here spoken of are not the "ego" which we have been discussing. It is the Way, the absolute Reality, as it manifests itself within the man. In order to regain this real "self," the natural centrifugal tendency of the mind must be checked and turned toward the opposite direction. In other words, the movement of the mind must be made centripetal.

This drastic change of the direction is, according to the Taoists, to be effected by the "closing up of all the openings and doors of the body" (Lao-tzŭ), that is, by stopping the normal functioning of the five senses and the differentiating activity of the reason. Obstructing thus all the possible outlets for the centrifugal tendency of the mind, man goes down into the depth of his mind until he encounters the "smallest thing" (*hsiao*) — as Lao-tzŭ calls it — which is no other than the Way itself as individualized in the form of the real existential core of the man. It is called "small" because the Way in this form is supra-sensible, too "small," so to speak, to be perceived by the eye. The Way in this individualized form is different, in a sense, from the Way *per se* before it begins to diversify itself. But we cannot say either that it is totally different from the latter, for, after all, it is but a particular manifestation of the Way itself. This relation is described by Lao-tzŭ in terms of the Mother-Child relationship. The Child is certainly not the Mother herself, but the two are connected with each other by an extremely intimate kind of connection. The Child is, in a sense, a duplicate of the Mother, so that he who knows the Child in reference to this particular relationship can be said to know by that very knowledge the Mother herself. Such a knowledge of the

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[72] *Fêng po chih min, Chuang-tzŭ* (E), XII, p. 436.
[73] *Tao chih chih min, ibid.* (E), XVI, p. 558.

Mother through the Child is "illumination." This idea is clearly expressed by Lao-tzŭ in the following passage:[74]

> All things under Heaven have a Beginning which is to be regarded as the Mother of all things. If one knows the Mother, one thereby knows her Children. And if, knowing the Children, one goes back to the Mother and holds fast to Her, one will never fall into a mistake until the very end of one's life.
>
> If a man blocks all his openings and closes up all his doors, (his spiritual energy) will never become exhausted all through his life. ... That a man perceives the "smallest thing" (by going into the inner depth of himself) is properly to be called "illumination."
>
> Holding onto what is soft and flexible (i.e., abandoning the rigidity of the mind which is unalterably fixed by the "essential" distinctions among things) is to be called the real (spiritual) strength.
>
> If a man elaborates his (natural) Light and thereby goes back to the state of "illumination," he will no longer suffer any harm. Such a state is what I would call "stepping into the eternally real" (*hsi ch'ang*).

It is remarkable that the experience of "illumination" is here directly connected with man's knowledge of himself. Man's knowing his own real "self" leads directly to an immediate and intuitive cognition of the Way. And this is done by man's turning into himself. Considered in this manner, the Way must be said to be in the interior depth of man from the very beginning. In this sense, there can be nobody but knows the Way. The Way is what man knows — in a very special sense, of course — by nature, from the very beginning. Thus, theoretically at least, everybody is in a position to *in*-tuit the Way. He must be able to become conscious of himself as a manifestation of the Way.

The external objects, on the contrary, cannot in the nature of the case be *in*-tuited; they are, and remain forever, "external" to himself. In this sense, they are forever "unknown" to him. Strangely enough, however, the human nature is such that it constantly "goes out" in pursuit of the "unknown" things, completely neglecting the most intimately "known" object — his own inner "self."

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[74] *Op. cit.*, LII.

> All men know how to seek for what they do not know, but nobody seems to know how to seek for what is already known.[75]

In ordinary circumstances, "to have good ears" means to be able to discriminate with exactitude between the five basic musical notes; and "to have good eyes" is to identify with exactitude various colors and forms. This, however, is far from being the real perspicacity as understood in the Taoist sense.

> What I mean by the expression "having good ears" does not concern the faculty of hearing the external objects (*t'a*). It concerns only hearing one's own "self" (*tzŭ*).
>
> What I mean by the expression "having good eyes" does not concern seeing the external objects. It concerns only seeing one's own "self."[76]

In this context, "seeing one's own self" (*tzŭ chien*) or self-intuition is equivalent to what the Zen Buddhists call "seeing one's (real) nature" (*chien hsing*). This is noted by the famous scholar of the Sung dynasty, Lin Hsi I, in his Commentary[77] on the *Chuang-tzŭ*, when he says: "This expression: 'not seeing the external objects, but seeing one's own self' epitomizes the teaching of the whole of the Buddhist Sūtras."

"Seeing one's own self" is so important because it does not consist solely in intuiting one's own "self." The "self" which man sees in his inner depth is, as I have remarked before, the Way as it manifests itself as an imperceptibly "small" point in the "inside" of the man. But in accordance with the principle of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the "smallest" point is here the same as the "biggest" thing. By *in*-tuiting this small point, and by being completely unified and identified with it — for "intuition" and "unification" are in this case exactly one and the same — the man directly *in*-tuits, and is unified with, the Way as it pervades the whole world of Being. He is now completely

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[75] *Chuang-tzŭ* (E), X, p. 359.
[76] *Ibid.* (E), VIII, p. 327.
[77] *Chuang-tzŭ K'ou I.*

identical with every one of the ten thousand things as they appear, disappear, and reappear in infinitely variegated forms, all being so many different phenomenal forms of the great Way itself. And since the Way remains "one" throughout this process of the universal Transmutation, the mind of a man who is unified with the Way is also "one." And since, further, the Way in its a-temporal aspect is also "one," the mind of such a man is, in this respect also, completely "one."

Now "seeing his own self" which plays such an important role in man's having an intuition of the Way, is prepared by what Chuang-tzŭ calls the "purification of the mind" — or more literally, the "fasting of the mind" (*hsin chai*).

The "purification of the mind" is, indeed, the pivotal point in the development of man from the state of an ordinary man to that of a Perfect Man. An ordinary man can never hope to become a Perfect Man unless he passes through this turning point.

As will be easy to see, the "purification of the mind" consists, in brief, in removing the "ego" which, as we have observed previously, offers a natural and the most serious obstacle in the way of the human mind turning from the centrifugal to the centripetal direction. Chuang-tzŭ himself gives an excellent explanation of the process of the mental purification in the following passage:[78]

> You must, first of all, unify the movements of your mind. Do not listen with your ears, but listen with the mind (thus unified and concentrated).
>
> (Then proceed further and) stop listening with the mind. Listen with the pure spirit.
>
> The ear (or more generally, sense perception) is confined to listening,[79] (i.e., each sense grasps only a particular kind of physical quality).

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[78] *Op. cit.*, IV, p. 147.

[79] In place of the *t'ing chih yü êrh* of the text, I read the following Yü Yüeh: *êrh chih yü t'ing*. Yü Yüeh (1821–1906) is a famous nineteenth-century philologist whose *Chu-tzŭ P'ing I* is full of ingenious suggestions.

The mind is confined to (forming) images corresponding to their external objects.

The pure spirit, on the contrary, is itself "void" (having no proper objects of its own), and goes on transforming limitlessly in accordance with (the universal Transmutation of) things. And the Way in its entirety comes into this "void."

Making the mind "void" (in this way) is what I mean by the "purification of the mind."

The human mind at the stage of the pure spirit is "void" (*hsü*), that is, "ego-less." But the absolute Reality, the Way, on its part, is a great Void. This great Void comes into the spiritual "void" without any obstruction. Or rather we should say: the two "voids" become completely identified with each other. The universal Transmutation of things which we have discussed in the previous chapter is here a subjective state of man, something that occurs in the interior of man. He himself is the subject of the universal Transmutation. He is, in other words, completely one with the ten thousand things as so many manifestations of the Way. This point is clarified by Chuang-tzŭ as follows:[80]

Look into that closed room and see how its empty "interior" produces of itself bright whiteness. All blessings of the world come to reside in that stillness.

If, on the contrary, (your mind) does not stand still, you are in the state of what I would call "sitting-galloping."

But if a man turns his ears and eyes toward the "interior" and drives out the working of his mind and reason, even gods and spirits will come freely (into the ego-less "interior" of such a man) to reside therein, not to speak of men. This is the (subjective) Transmutation of the ten thousand things.

The same thought is expressed in various forms throughout the *Book of Chuang-tzŭ*. In view of its importance, I shall give here one

[80] *Chuang-tzŭ*, IV, p. 50.

more passage, in which the "purification of the mind" is called "fostering the mind."[81]

> What is important is that you should "foster your mind." If you but place yourself in the sphere of Non-Doing,[82] all things will transmute themselves into one another[83] of themselves.
>
> If you dissolve your body and form, obstruct the working of your power of hearing and sight (i.e., the senses), and forget both your kind (i.e., men) and things, you will be completely unified with the Chaos. If you untie your mind and loosen your spirit, and become as still and tranquil as if you had no soul, the ten thousand things in their natural exuberance will each go back to its Root.

This is the state of being "ego-less." And when such a state is actualized in a man, we witness the birth of a Perfect Man.

The "purification of the mind" is also called by Chuang-tzŭ characteristically "sitting in oblivion" (*tso wang*), in contrast to "sitting-galloping" of which mention was made earlier in the present chapter. "Sitting in oblivion" is an expression descriptive of the outward appearance of the man who has become "ego-less." But its content is just the same as that of the "purification of the mind." The last point will be made clear by an examination of the definition which Chuang-tzŭ himself gives of "sitting in oblivion."

> What is the meaning of "sitting in oblivion"?
>
> It means that all the members of the body become dissolved, and the activities of the ears and eyes (i.e., the activities of all the sense organs) become abolished, so that the man makes himself free from both form and mind (i.e., from the consciousness of the bodily and mental self-identity), and becomes united and unified with the (Way) that pervades all.[84] This is what I call "sitting in oblivion."[85]

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[81] *Ibid.* (E), p. 390.

[82] Non-Doing is one of the highest principles of Taoism. It consists in man's not interfering with the natural course of things, leaving everything as it is.

[83] *Viz.*, on both the temporal and the a-temporal level of Being.

[84] *Ta t'ung*, lit. Great Pervader.

[85] *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 284.

Externally, all the members of the body have become "dissolved" and forgotten. Internally, all activities of perception have been "abolished." The consciousness of the "ego" as the center of the external and internal existence of man has totally been effaced. As the result of this total oblivion of the inside and the outside of "I," the above-mentioned state of "void" arises. And, as Lin Hsi I remarks,[86] since there is no "I" there are no "objects." The disappearance of the "ego" naturally results in the disappearance of all "objects" from the consciousness. Things are still there, in a certain sense. But as "objects" which are distinguished from each other by their "essential" boundaries, they disappear completely from the consciousness. They are now there, totally transformed into an all-pervading Unity. But the all-pervading Unity is nothing other than the Great Void.

The outward look of a man in such a state of oblivion is "like a withered tree," and his mind is "like dead ashes."[87] In a fictitious interview with Lao-tzŭ, which is described in the *Chuang-tzŭ*,[88] Confucius is amazed at the strange appearance of Lao-tzŭ:

> Lao-tzŭ had just washed his hair, and was letting it hang down, dishevelled, in order to make it dry. Completely motionless, he looked as if he were not a man.
>
> Confucius stood aside and waited. After a while, (when Lao-tzŭ came back to his normal consciousness) Confucius said: "Were my eyes dazzled? Or was it really you? Just now, your body looked as stiff as a withered tree. You were standing there in absolute solitude, oblivious of things and apart from men. Such was the impression I received."
>
> To this Lao-tzŭ replied: "I was letting my mind freely wander in the Beginning of all things."

The "free wandering in the Beginning of all things" is one of the most favorite ideas of Chuang-tzŭ, which he expresses in various forms everywhere in his Book. It means, primarily, the experience of the ecstatic unification of man with the Absolute, and, secondarily,

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[86] *Op. cit., ad Chuang-tzŭ* II, p. 43.
[87] *Chuang-tzŭ*, II, p. 43.
[88] *Ibid.* (E), XXI, p. 711.

the peculiar state of mind that remains behind after the ecstasy has left him. The whole world, in the eyes of such a man, assumes a totally different form from the one in which it used to appear to him before this experience. He begins to see all things in a totally different light. He is now a Perfect Man. And the philosophical world-view of Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ is a picture of the world as viewed and interpreted by such a man after he has come back to his normal state of consciousness from the ecstatic union with the Way.

In an important passage of his Book, Chuang-tzŭ gives a more detailed explanation of the "purification of the mind." The whole process is described in an analytic way stage by stage until the mind, completely purified, experiences the "illumination." The passage is important for our purpose in that it depicts the inner structure of the "sitting in oblivion" as a process of the gradual development of the human mind toward the highest Taoist perfection.

In this passage,[89] a Perfect Man, Nü Yü by name, narrates how he once taught a man who had from the very beginning a remarkable potentiality to be a Perfect Man. He begins his account of what happened then in the following way:

> I persistently taught the man. After three days, he learnt how to put the world outside himself.

Forgetting the existence of the world marks the first stage of the "sitting in oblivion." The "world" by nature lies relatively remote from man. Therefore, it is the easiest thing for him to forget. Nü Yü continues:

> After he had put the world outside himself, I persistently instructed him. And in seven days he learnt how to put the "things" outside himself.

This is the second stage of the "sitting in oblivion." The word "things" here means the familiar things that surround man in his

[89] *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 252–253.

daily life, including, of course, the men and women who are intimately connected with him. At this second stage, all these "things" disappear from the consciousness. And then:

> After he had put the "things" outside himself, I still continued to instruct him. And in nine days he learnt how to put "life" outside himself.

This represents the third stage. It consists in man's erasing from his consciousness his own "life," that is, his own personal existence. This corresponds to what we have discussed earlier in this chapter as the removal of the "ego." And with the disappearance of the "ego," the whole world, in both its internal and external aspects, disappears from the consciousness.

This stage is immediately followed by the next, the fourth stage which is the sudden coming of the dawn of "illumination."

> After he had put "life" outside himself, there suddenly appeared the first light of dawn.

After this there are no more stages to come. What is described as the succeeding "stages" are not, in reality, "states," for they occur at once and all together the moment the "illumination" has opened the spiritual eye. The first of such "stages" is seeing the absolute Unity.

> The moment the day dawned, he saw the Unity.

All things are seen in the midst of the original Chaos which comprehends them in an absolute Unity. No more opposition of the subject and the object; the subject that "sees" and the object "seen" are completely unified. All things are one. And since there is no longer any distinction between the things, there can be no distinction in terms of the order of time: "before" and "after," "past," "present" and "future."

> And after he had seen the Unity, there was (in his consciousness) neither "past" nor "present."

There is no longer any consciousness of "time." The man is in the Eternal Now. And since there is no consciousness of time, the man is

now in a realm which transcends "life" and "death."

> After having nullified the "past" and the "present," he was able to enter the state of "no-Death-no-Life."

The state of "no-Death-no-Life" is a symbolic expression for the absolute spiritual freedom with which the Perfect Man wanders to his heart's content in the realm of the "heavenly equalization." He is not only beyond Life and Death. He is beyond everything, because the Way itself with which he is now completely unified and identified is beyond everything.

It is important to note, however, that this "transcendence" is not a simple, straightforward "transcendence." It is a very peculiar kind of "transcendence" because it is — again by the principle of the *coincidentia oppositorum* — at the same time "immanence." For, as we already know, the man, by the very fact that he is completely unified and identified with the Way, finds himself also unified and identified with the ten thousand things which are nothing but so many divergent phenomenal forms of the Absolute. By being *beyond* them, he is *with*, and *within*, the ten thousand things.

VI

Taoist Metaphysics

As I have pointed out before, the philosophical world-view of Taoism is a result of the theoretical elaboration of what is actually experienced in the ecstatic intuition that has been described in the previous chapter. It is the picture of the world as it appears to the eyes of the Perfect Man. Quite naturally, the Chaos occupies the central place in the structure of this ontology. The latter starts from, and is based upon, the "chaotic" vision of the things, in which all of them are seen reposing in the bosom of their ultimate ontological Ground.

> (The Perfect Man is a man who) lets his spiritual energy rise far into

> the heavenly height, and mounts on the light (to wander freely in the universe). This state in which he is absolutely beyond the limitations of the body is that which is properly to be called the Boundless Illumination (*chao k'uang*). Such a man understands perfectly the determined course of things, and knows to the utmost the reality of things, so that, in his eyes, Heaven and Earth melt away, and the ten thousand things totally disappear. The ten thousand things thus go back to their real Ground. This is what I would call the Confused Obscurity (*hun ming*, i.e., the original undifferentiation, the Chaos).[90]

It is worthy of remark that in this passage again the ontological Chaos is described as something to be intuited only by the Perfect Man who has put his mind in the state of Chaos. There is a perfect correspondence between the objective and the subjective Chaos. It goes without saying that the "subjective Chaos" means nothing other than the ecstatic state of the mind arrived at by the process of "sitting in oblivion."

But since, as we have seen, the ecstatic experience of the Perfect Man consists of several psychological stages, to say that the ontology of Taoism is a theoretical elaboration of the ecstatic experience is the same as to say that it is also composed of a number of stages. What follows is an analytic description of these ontological stages each corresponding to a particular subjective stage in the process of the "sitting in oblivion."

In the last section of the preceding chapter, the psychological stages leading up to ecstasy have been given as an ascending movement of the mind. There, the mind starts from the lowest stage, that is, the level of the ordinary daily consciousness, and goes on gradually deepening the oblivion of things, until at the utmost limit of ecstasy all things are obliterated completely from the consciousness leaving the mind in a perfect state of "void."

The highest psychological stage of the "void" thus arrived at corresponds to the highest ontological principle in the system of Taoist

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[90] *Chuang-tzŭ* (E), XXII, p. 443.

metaphysics. This metaphysics is formed by reversing the order of the ascending process of the "sitting in oblivion." Thus the process by which the ontological system of Taoism is formed follows the ecstatic movement of the mind in a descending order, from the stage of the complete "oblivion" back to the level of the normal cognitive activity of the mind. That is to say, starting from the level of the absolute Unity, it descends stage by stage until it reaches the level of "essential" Multiplicity.

The first, i.e., highest ontological stage is, needless to say, that of the absolute Unity. But "unity" in this context is a unity which, psychologically, arises by the ten thousand things having been totally obliterated from the mind. The total "oblivion" leaves absolutely nothing in the human consciousness. It is, in this sense, Non-Being or *Nothing*. At this highest stage of ecstasy, all the traces of phenomenal things have been erased from the consciousness; even the consciousness itself has disappeared.

We are now in a strange metaphysical realm where we see absolutely nothing, not even ourselves. There is no object to be seen. There is no subject to see. Nor is there any act of seeing. Symbolically, Chuang-tzŭ calls this unusual metaphysical realm the "Village of There-Is-Nothing" (*wu ho yu chih hsiang*) and the "Wilderness of Limitlessly-Wide" (*k'uang mo chih ye*).

Ontologically, he also describes it as the stage at which "nothing has ever existed from the very beginning."

> What is the ultimate limit of cognition? It is the stage represented by the view that nothing has ever existed from the very beginning. This is the furthest limit (of cognition), beyond which there can be no further stage.[91]

It will be evident from what has been said that the Way at this highest level is absolutely beyond all reasoning and

[91] *Ibid.*, II. p. 74.

conceptualization. It is of course beyond the grasp of sense perception. In order to understand this point we have only to remember the fact that it can be *in*-tuited only at the extreme limit of ecstasy. The Way at this stage is an absolute Transcendent. Lao-tzŭ tries to bring home this point by accumulating such adjectives as "ineffable," "nameless," "formless," "figureless," "invisible," "inaudible," etc.

> The Way in its absolute reality has no name.[92]
>
> The Way is hidden and nameless.[93]
>
> Even if we try to see it, it cannot be seen. In this respect it might be called "figureless."
>
> Even if we try to hear it, it cannot be heard. In this respect it might be called "inaudibly faint."
>
> Even if we try to grasp it, it cannot be touched. In this respect it might be called "extremely minute."
>
> In these three aspects, it is "unfathomable." And the three aspects are merged into one.[94]

Lao-tzŭ refers to this aspect of the Way by the word Non-Thing (*wu wu*).[95] The word Non-Thing or Non-Being, however, carries in contexts of this kind another meaning which is already quite familiar to us; namely, that all things lose their "essential" distinctions and become fused into a vast "undifferentiation," which, looked at from the point of view of the things, is identical with being "nothing."

There is another very important point to be noticed regarding the concept of Non-Being (*wu*). By this I am referring to the fact that the *Nothing* has two aspects which are turned toward opposite directions: positive and negative. For the right understanding of the ontological structure of Taoism, it is absolutely necessary for us to distinguish these two aspects one from another.

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[92] *Tao Tê Ching*, XXXII.

[93] *Ibid.*, XLI.

[94] *Ibid.*, XIV.

[95] *Ibid.*, XIV: "... Since it cannot properly be named by any name, it ultimately comes back to (the name) Non-Thing."

The Way in its positive aspect is turned toward the created world. It is because of this aspect that the Way is to be regarded as "the Granary of the ten thousand things."[96] The inner constitution of the underlying thought is easy to see. We know already that the Way at this stage is the absolute Unity in which the ten thousand things are fused into an undifferentiated whole. Viewed from the reverse side, this would simply mean that the Way contains from the very beginning the ten thousand things in the state of potentiality. The Way in this respect is the very ontological source of all things. It is, as Lao-tzŭ puts it, the "Gateway of myriad wonders."[97] And since, as we shall see, the creative activity of the Way is interminable and inexhaustible, things infinitely go out of this "Gateway" into the world of Multiplicity.

Strictly speaking, it is to this positive aspect of the Way that Lao-tzŭ refers when he states that the Way is "nameless."

> The Nameless is the beginning of Heaven and Earth.[98]

"Heaven and Earth" is equivalent, in a more philosophical terminology, to Being (*yu*). The Way in its positive aspect is not yet actually Heaven and Earth. But *in potentia* it is already Heaven and Earth. This is what is meant by the expression "the beginning of Heaven and Earth."

The same is true even of the term Non-Being, although we must admit its ambiguity. It is ambiguous because it can be used in a loose sense in reference to the ontological level of Unity without regard to the distinction between its positive and negative aspects. But in a more strict usage, at least, Non-Being is synonymous with the term Nameless as understood in the sense just explained.

> The ten thousand things under Heaven are born out of Being, while

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[96] *Ibid.*, LXII.
[97] *Ibid.*, I.
[98] *Ibid.*, I.

Being itself is born out of Non-Being.[99]

It is significant that in this passage Being is said to be "born out of Non-Being." This means that Non-Being here refers to the creative, i.e., positive, aspect of the absolute Reality.

In the following passage, the same term Non-Being is used in such a way as to make it a step closer to the Way in its negative aspect. However, the ending part of the passage clearly shows that Lao-tzŭ has in mind a stage further up to be assigned to the Way in its negative, i.e., totally absolute, aspect.

> In the eternal Non-Being (the Perfect Man) would see the mysterious Reality (*miao*) of the Way, while in the eternal Being he would see its aspect of limitations (*chiao*).
>
> These two aspects are (in origin) one and the same thing. But once externalized, they assume different names (i.e., Non-Being and Being). In (the original state of) the "sameness," (the Way) is to be called the Mystery (*hsüan*). The Mystery of Mysteries (*hsüan chih yu hsüan*) it really is! And it is (in its positive aspect) the Gateway of myriad wonders.[100]

The Way in its truly absolute aspect can have no name other than "mystery." For it transcends all determinations, even that of negativity itself. Strictly speaking, even considering it "negative" is but a metaphorical way of thinking. We cannot say anything about it. It is absolutely ineffable. Thus Lao-tzŭ calls it Mystery with the understanding that it is but a provisional name. It is a name designed to suggest that the Way in this aspect is something eternally unknown and eternally unknowable.

Thus in an attempt at approaching this ineffable Something to the utmost limit of possibility on the level of conceptual thinking, Lao-tzŭ goes beyond the sphere of Non-Being. The Non-Being — to which he refers in the passage just quoted as "the eternal Non-Being" (*ch'ang wu*) — represents, as he himself admits, the "mysterious Reality" (*miao*) of the Way. It is, in this sense, nothing other than what he designates

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[99] *Ibid.*, XL.
[100] *Ibid.*, I.

by the term Mystery, the ultimate and the most profound metaphysical reality of the Way. Yet it is not exactly the same as the Mystery in that it is conceptually opposed to Being. Conceptually, Non-Being is the contradictory of Being. And in that respect it cannot be the last thing. This conceptual opposition itself must be transcended in order that we might reach the "unfathomable" Mystery, the Mystery of Mysteries. The latter is a metaphysical state in which even Being and Non-Being are not yet distinguished from each other.

All this makes it clear that the term Non-Being is ambiguous. And the ambiguity is the more dangerous because the problem concerns a very delicate point in the whole structure of the Taoist world-view. We have to remember that we are here using language in reference to a metaphysical region where language, properly speaking, is of no avail. We are trying to conceptualize what transcends all conceptualization. The ambiguity in question comes from the fact that the Way in its ultimate stage *is* Non-Being in two senses which are different from each other in an extremely delicate and subtle way: absolute and relative. The point is, however, that, unlike on the level of ordinary conceptual thinking, the "absolute" and the "relative" are not separated by a sharp line of demarcation.

This subtle situation is indicated by the last sentence of the above-quoted passage: "And it is the Gateway (*mên*) of myriad wonders,"[101] which immediately follows the statement that the Way at the stage beyond Being and Non-Being is the Mystery of Mysteries. Still more interesting than this is the choice of the word *hsüan* itself as a linguistic symbol for the Mystery. This word originally means "blackness." But it is a peculiar kind of "blackness" containing a faint admixture of redness. The choice of this word would seem to suggest that the Way in its absolute Nothingness is utterly dark, i.e., absolutely invisible and unfathomable, but that in the utter darkness of this Mystery there is noticeable a faint foreboding — symbolized by the admixture of redness — of the appearance of the phenomenal things. Thus

[101]The "myriad wonders" means the same as the "ten thousand things."

even at the stage of the Mystery, the Way reveals itself to be a *coincidentia oppositorum*.

In regard to this problem, Chuang-tzŭ maintains a logical attitude in a much more thoroughgoing way. In order to distinguish on the conceptual level the Non-Being in the absolute sense from the Non-Being in the relative sense, he resorts to a logical device consisting of three Non-Beings piled up one upon another in the form of a negation-of-negation-of-negation (*wu* [3]-*wu* [2]-*wu* [1]).

This formula clearly and succinctly shows the stages of the logical process by which we, starting from the level of Multiplicity, i.e., that of Being in its concretely diversified forms, finally arrive at the realization of the absolute Transcendent. The last of the chain, *wu* [1] represents the concept of Non-Being which is formed by the negation of the concept of Being. It means that the absolute Reality is not the things as they exist on the level of Multiplicity.

The first concept of Non-Being, constituted in this way, is a result of the simple negation of Being. In other words, it stands on the very basis of the concept of Being. And as such it is but a relative concept. This relativity must be eliminated if we are to reach an absolute standpoint. Thus the first Non-Being, *wu* [1], is negated. The result is the second Non-Being whose inner structure is shown by the formula: *wu* [2]-*wu* [1], that is, the Non-Being obtained by the negation-of-negation. Since this second Non-Being has thus been obtained by the negation of all relativity, it is in the nature of the case "absolute." In ordinary circumstances in which more meticulous precision is not required, the Non-Being of the second degree, *wu-wu* or Non-Non-Being[102] may very well represent the ultimate stage of the metaphysical Nothingness. And, in fact, we sometimes encounter the expression used in this way. We find a good example of this usage in the following passage[103] which allegedly reproduces a

[102]It goes without saying that this must be articulated as Non-[Non-Being].
[103]*Chuang-tzŭ* (E), XXII, p. 760.

conversation that once took place between a man called Bright-Light (*Kuang Yao*)[104] and a man called Non-Being (*Wu Yu*).[105]

> Bright-Light asked Non-Being, saying, "Do you exist or do you not exist?"
>
> As he got no answer, he remained there staring fixedly at Non-Being's appearance. Non-Being looked limitlessly profound and void. All day long Bright-Light tried to see the other, without being able to see anything definite. He listened, without being able to hear anything definite. He tried to touch him, without being able to get hold of anything.
>
> At last Bright-Light remarked, "This indeed is the utmost limit (of Perfection)! Who could attain to such a state? All I can do is to conceive of Non-Being as something existent.[106] I can never nullify the Non-Being itself (*wu wu*). As long as I thus remain at the stage of nullifying Being (*wu yu*), how can I possibly attain to such a state?

The following passage is of special interest in that it expresses the same idea in reference to Lao-tzŭ's "Gateway of myriad wonders," which is here called the Heavenly Gateway (*t'ien mên*). The passage clarifies the idea that the "Gateway of myriad wonders," that is, the Way *qua* the ultimate ontological source of all things, is but the positive side of the absolute Non-Being, and that the negative, i.e., truly absolute Non-Being itself can be reached only by the negation of this positive Non-Being.

> The Heavenly Gateway is not anything that exists (*wu yu*, Non-Being). And the ten thousand things come out of this Non-Being. (This is due to the fact that) Being itself cannot be made Being by Being; (i.e., what makes Being Being cannot but be something different from Being). It cannot but come out of Non-Being.
>
> And yet, this very state of "there-is-absolutely-nothing-existent" does not, in reality, exist; (i.e., the Heavenly Gateway which is a Non-Being

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[104]The name obviously symbolizes the "bright light" of reason.

[105]Or, There-Is-No-Existence.

[106]This means that the human reason represents even Non-Being as Something, as a kind of Being. Non-Being thus conceived is, at the most, a Non-Being on the same level as Being. It is the contradictory of Being, and, as such, is relative.

must itself be negated so that we might reach the absolute Non-Being).[107]

Chuang-tzŭ, however, does not remain content with this second degree of Non-Being. For him it does not yet do full justice to the concept of the absolutely negative Non-Being. The second degree of Non-Being, although it is admittedly "absolute" in that it has been obtained by the negation of both Being and Non-Being, still keeps in itself a trace or reflection of the original opposition which has been negated with regard to Being and Non-Being. As such it is not yet absolutely "absolute." In order to eliminate even this faint trace of relativity, the Non-Non-Being itself must again be negated. Thus finally the concept of *wu*[3]-*wu*[2]-*wu*[1] or Non-Non-Non-Being[108] is established as representative of the Way in its absolutely unconditional transcendence. The "unconditional transcendence" must be understood to mean that the Way at this stage transcends even the condition of being unconditional.

The logical process, here analyzed, by which the concept of Non-Non-Non-Being is established in such an absolute unconditionality, is described by Chuang-tzŭ in an extremely terse and laconic way. The text as it stands is very difficult to understand. It runs as follows:[109]

> (1) There is the thesis that Being exists (*yu yu*). (2) The (next) thesis is that Non-Being exists (*yu wu*). (3) The (next) is that there has never existed from the very beginning Non-Being-being-existent.[110] (4) The (next) is that there has never existed from the very beginning (that which is asserted by the previous thesis, namely) there-has-never-been-from-the-very-beginning-Non-Being-being-existent.[111]

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[107] *Chuang-tzŭ* (M), XXIII, p. 800.

[108] Which must be articulated as Non-(Non-[Non-Being]).

[109] *Op. cit.*, II, p. 79.

[110] This is the negation of the thesis (2), i.e., the negation of Non-Being. It is the position of *wu wu*, the second degree of negation.

[111] This is the negation of the thesis (3). The result is the establishment of the *wu-wu-wu* or Non-(Non-[Non-Being]).

From the purely logical point of view, the process which has just been described could proceed endlessly, the fourth thesis, for example, being negated by the fifth, which, again, being negated by the sixth, etc. However, we have to remember at this point that the formula Non-(Non-[Non-Being]) is just a symbol for the ultimate metaphysical state of the absolute Reality. By the very process by which we have arrived at it, it has been made clear that conceptually we have already transcended the contradictory opposition of Being and Non-Being and have stepped into a metaphysical sphere where even the faintest trace of that opposition does not remain and where it would properly be meaningless even to talk about Non-Being. And if we understand our formula in such a sense, we find it good enough to represent the ultimate stage of the Way. If, on the contrary, we do not interpret our formula in that way, we shall find it utterly powerless in representing the Way in its real negativity no matter how many more "negations" we may accumulate. We shall do well to recall that the formula Non-(Non-[Non-Being]) is intended to describe logically and conceptually the metaphysical state which corresponds on the psychological side, to what is experienced at the highest limit of ecstatic or mystic intuition.

That which is actually intuited in ecstasy is by nature beyond the grasp of *logos*. So the ontological stage which corresponds to the highest stage of ecstasy by nature transcends all linguistic and conceptual apprehension. If, in spite of that, we do attempt, as Chuang-tzŭ himself does, to approach it conceptually, we have to transcend at some point or other our own conceptual thinking into the sphere of ecstatic intuition. Otherwise, all our logical reasoning about it would simply be futile and useless.

Turning back again to the positive aspect of the Way in the state of an absolute transcendence, we immediately notice that it is not "nothing" in a purely negative sense. We are still in the domain of the Way *per se*, and it is still definitely Non-Being. But in this Non-Being, as we have already seen, there is something noticeable that

foreshadows Being, and indirectly the ten thousand things to come. It is the Nameless (*wu ming*); it is still indescribable and ineffable. But the Nameless is already the beginning of Heaven and Earth, that is, Being. And the latter, which is also called the Named (*yu ming*), is the Absolute at the stage at which it acts as the principle of creativeness.[112]

> The Nameless is the beginning of Heaven and Earth.
> The Named is the Mother of ten thousand things.[113]

The transition from the negative Non-Being to the positive Non-Being is given by Lao-tzŭ in the following passage[114] a symbolic description. The description must of necessity become symbolic because it tries to depict verbally something which lies beyond the descriptive power of language.

> The Way in its absolute reality is utterly vague, utterly indistinct.
>
> Utterly indistinct, utterly vague, and yet there is in the midst of it (a shadowy) Image.
>
> Utterly vague, utterly indistinct, and yet there is in the midst of it Something.
>
> Utterly profound, utterly dark, and yet there is in the midst of it a Reality. This Reality is, indeed, eternal and unchanging, so that from of old till present its Name[115] has never left it. Through this Name it governs the principles of all existents.

And in another place Lao-tzŭ says:[116]

> Deep and bottomless, it is like the origin and principle of the ten

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[112]The "Named" constitutes the second stage in the descending process of the Way. We shall deal with it later. Here we are still within the first stage of this process.

[113]*Tao Tê Ching*, I.

[114]*Ibid.*, XXI.

[115]The Way at the stage of creativeness is the Named. The preceding lines describe the Way at the stage at which, coming out of the Darkness of pure negativity, it comes closer to being the Named.

[116]*Op. cit.*, IV.

thousand things. ...
There is nothing, and yet there seems to be Something.

And thus we gradually come down to the second ontological stage of the Way, that of Being (*yu*).

> The ten thousand things under Heaven are born out of Being (*yu*), while Being itself is born out of Non-Being (*wu*).[117]

This is the stage of the Named which, as we have seen above, Lao-tzŭ regards as the "Mother of ten thousand things." It is the stage of Being before it actually begins to spread itself out in myriads of concrete forms on the ontological level of Multiplicity. It has, of course, a corresponding psychological state on the part of man.

In terms of the phenomenological description of the experience of ecstasy, we may explain it by saying that it is the middle stage between the highest extremity of ecstatic "oblivion" and the level of normal consciousness. From the state of a perfect "oblivion" of everything, including even the subject of ecstasy, the ecstatic man begins to come back toward a full consciousness of himself and of the world. Midway between these two psychological stages, the complete subjective "void" and the glaring brilliance of the normal functioning of the mind, he falls into a peculiar state of consciousness in whose dim and obscure light, "things" begin to loom vaguely and confusedly. This is the ontological state of the Chaos which we have discussed in detail in the preceding chapter. To the subjective Chaos there corresponds the objective, ontological Chaos.

Speaking of this stage Chuang-tzŭ remarks:[118]

> Next is the stage at which there arises the consciousness of "things" being existent. But (at this level) the "boundaries" between them have never existed from the very beginning.

At this level, Chuang-tzŭ says, there is a dim and indistinct consciousness of the existence of things. But they have absolutely no

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[117] *Ibid.*, I, quoted above (see p. 57).
[118] *Op. cit.*, II, p. 74.

"boundaries." It goes without saying that the word "boundaries" here means the "essences" or "quiddities" which distinguish and differentiate the things definitely from each other. Dimly illuminated by a "shaded Light" (*pao kuang*),[119] all things show themselves in a "chaotic" state. As we know already, this "chaotic state" of things is what Chuang-tzŭ calls also "heavenly leveling" or "heavenly equalization" which means the stage at which the Unity "levels" all differences and "equalizes" all oppositions and contradictions.

Since the Chaos is an undifferentiated and confused whole, it is the ontological stage of Unity. But since, on the other hand, it contains all things in the state of *potentia*, it is, in this particular sense, already Multiplicity. Otherwise expressed, it is a perfect Unity of Multiplicity, a Unity as a *coincidentia oppositorum*. The Way at this stage is One and at the same time Many; Many, but at the same time One.

This ontological situation is described by Lao-tzŭ as the One being "embraced" or "acquired" by each of the ten thousand things. All things, in other words, partake of the Way *qua* the One. By being "acquired," i.e., partaken of, by everything, the One forms the ontological core of everything. And everything, by partaking of the One, becomes and remains what it is. In this sense, the One is that aspect of the Way — more strictly we should add: at the stage of Being — in which it begins to show its creative activity. And this must be what is meant by Lao-tzŭ when he says: "The Named (i.e., Being) is the Mother of the ten thousand things."[120] The "acquisition" of the One by all things is indicated by Lao-tzŭ in the following way:[121]

> Heaven, by acquiring the One, is limpid. Earth, by acquiring the One, is tranquil. The Spirits, by acquiring the One, are divine. The valley, by acquiring the One is full.

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[119] *Ibid.*, II, p. 83. The word *pao* means, according to Ch'êng Hsüan Ying, "covered."

[120] *Op. cit.*, I, quoted above (see p. 63).

[121] *Ibid.*, XXXIX.

> The ten thousand things, by acquiring the One, are alive. ... All these are what they are because of the One.

This conception of the One presents the Way as the indwelling ontological principle of all things. For to say that the Way is "acquired" by each of the ten thousand things is to say that the Way is actually present in each of them as its ontological ground. Nothing is what it is except by partaking of the Way *qua* the One. Thus the latter is present in all things without a single exception, ranging from the highest to the lowest.

> Tung Kuo-tzŭ once asked Chuang-tzŭ, saying "Where is that which you call the Way?"
> Chuang-tzŭ: "Everywhere."
> Tung Kuo-tzŭ: "Specify the particular places, if you want to convince me."
> Chuang-tzŭ: "It is in ants."
> Tung Kuo-tzŭ: "Indeed!? In such low things ?"
> Chuang-tzŭ: "It is also in weeds."
> Tung Kuo-tzŭ: "You have come down to lower things!"
> Chuang-tzŭ: "It is also in tiles and earthenware."
> Tung Kuo-tzŭ: "Still lower!"
> Chuang-tzŭ: "It is also found in excrement."
> Thereupon Tung Kuo-tzŭ did not find anything more to say.[122]

A thing being "high" or "low" is determined only from a human viewpoint. The appearance of "values" is a matter peculiar to the fourth stage of the ontological structure of the world of Being, which we shall discuss later. From the viewpoint of the One, all things are equal. It is equally acquired by all things. And the Way in this sense is "immanent" in everything.

Thus the Way combines transcendence and immanence. In its absolute negativity — which is expressed by the formula Non-(Non-[Non-Being]) — it absolutely transcends everything, while in the form of the One it is immanent in all things without exception. And the "immanence" means nothing other than that the things as we

[122] *Chuang-tzŭ* (E), XXII, pp. 749–750.

observe them on the level of Multiplicity are so many phenomenal forms assumed by the Way itself. This is what is meant by the Way being the "Mother of the ten thousand things."

The idea of the immanence of the Way brings into existence one of the most basic concepts in Taoism: *tê*, which we may provisionally translate by "virtue." The supreme importance of this term may be known by the very fact that the book which has come down to us under the name of Lao-tzŭ is entitled: *Tao Tê Ching* or the "Canonical Book of the Way and the Virtue." The concept itself is by now too clear to us to require any lengthy explanation. It is the Way *qua* the One as it is "acquired" by everything. We may note in this connection that the original meaning of the word *tê* is "to acquire."

Everything partakes of the Way *qua* the One. By partaking of the Way, everything "acquires" its own existential core. And the Way, once "acquired" by a thing, begins to work in the latter in the form of its Virtue. Everything is what it is, and everything becomes what it becomes by dint of this immanent existential principle.

> The Way gives birth to (the ten thousand things). And (once they are born) the Virtue fosters them; things furnish them with forms (i.e., they grow up as "things," each being furnished with a definite form); and the natural impetus completes their development. ...
>
> The Way gives them birth. The Virtue fosters them, makes them grow, feeds them, completes them, crystallizes them, stabilizes them, rears them, and shelters them.
>
> In this way, the Way gives birth (to all things), yet does not claim them to be its own possession. It works, and yet it is not boastful. It makes (things) grow, yet exercises no authority. This is what I would call the Mysterious Virtue.[123]

Everything is born and becomes what it becomes by the creative activity of the Way. And yet the latter "does not claim the things to be its own possession"; "it is not boastful"; "it exercises no authority." That is to say, although the growth and perfection of everything is

[123] *Tao Tê Ching*, LI.

ultimately due to the creative activity of the Way, the latter does not show itself directly in this process. The whole work is done, so to speak, in the name of the Virtue which is the very existential core of the thing. It is as though everything could do what it does and could become what it becomes quite naturally, of itself, by its own power.

The Way in this sense does not interfere with anything. It leaves everything to its natural course. This is the great and universal principle of Non-Doing (*wu wei*) which characterizes the world-view of Taoism.

> The eternal Way acts (in accordance with the principle of) Non-Doing. And yet it leaves nothing undone.[124]

This statement of Lao-tzŭ is explicated in the following passage from the *Chuang-tzŭ* (E),[125] in which, we may note, the Way is considered at the stage of "Heaven and Earth," i.e., Being.

> Heaven works (on the principle of) Non-Doing; therefore it is limpid. Earth works (on the principle of) Non-Doing; therefore it is tranquil.[126]
>
> Through the union of these two forms of Non-Doing the ten thousand things are born and develop in a natural way.
>
> Imperceptible and obscure, indeed, is this (natural process)! It is as if it came out of no source.
>
> Obscure and imperceptible, indeed, is this (natural process)! It is as if it had no form.
>
> And yet, from the bosom of this (invisible and indefinite) Non-Doing the ten thousand things go on being produced infinitely. This is why it is said: "Heaven and Earth act (in accordance with the principle of) Non-Doing, and yet they leave nothing undone."

Thus everything comes into being and develops until it attains to its ontological perfection through the all-pervading activity of the

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[124] *Ibid.*, XXXVII.

[125] XVIII, p. 612.

[126] See the passage from *Tao Tê Ching* (XXXIX), which we have quoted above in connection with the concept of the immanence of the Way *qua* One.

Way. But since, in this case, the Way works as the immanent principle of each thing, the creative activity of the Way *is* the activity of the thing itself. Therefore, although the thing follows its naturally determined course, nothing is forced upon it from the outside. The vital force which keeps the thing in existence and which makes it grow as it should wells up from the very depth of its own existence. This is the secret of the universal Non-Doing.

In talking about the concept of the Way as the One which is partaken of by the ten thousand things, we have already come down to the third ontological stage which, according to the explanation given by Chuang-tzŭ, immediately follows that of the Chaos. The third ontological stage is described by Chuang-tzŭ in the following way:[127]

> Next is the stage at which "boundaries" are recognized (among the things). However, there is as yet absolutely no distinction made between "right" and "wrong."

Psychologically, this stage marks the return of the normal consciousness. As the contemplative leaves the spiritual "void" of ecstasy and comes down to this stage, he begins to see things in their ordinary, familiar forms. The ontological Chaos disappears. Instead, the ten thousand things whose presence has been felt vaguely and confusedly at the previous stage, now disclose themselves in the bright daylight, each having its own demarcation line by which it is clearly distinguished from others.

Ontologically, this is the stage of "essences." The original Unity is lost. And Multiplicity takes its place.

The structure of the domain of Multiplicity was discussed in full detail in Chapter II in connection with the essentialist position of the Confucians, so that there is no need for further discussion. The only point I would like to make here is that in the eyes of the contemplative who has just "come back" from the state of ecstasy, those

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[127] *Op. cit.*, II, p. 74.

numberless things that are marked by their seemingly eternal "essences" are but so many phenomenal forms of the Way. And since they are all nothing but divergent forms of the Way, they are, in this particular respect, as "real" as the very Source from which they have come out. A serious problem arises only when the level of Multiplicity is considered *the* only reality, all the preceding stages being products of sheer imagination or conceptual abstraction. It is at this point that the Taoists rise against essentialism. Essentialism must be combatted because it regards the "essence" as something permanent and eternally unchangeable. The veil of the "essences" thus created in our mind intervenes between us and the higher ontological level, that of the Chaos, and conceals the latter from our eyes. From the point of view of Taoism, the level of Multiplicity represents the last stage of the self-manifesting activity of the absolute Reality, and as such there is nothing wrong about it so long as it is kept in the right place within the whole scheme of ontology, and so long as "essences" are observed as they really are.

The right view — from the Taoist standpoint — of the matter is this. The "essences" or "boundaries" are phenomenal forms of the Way. But since the Way itself has no real "boundaries," the ten thousand things, as phenomenal forms of *the ultimate Reality* have no "boundaries," although, as *phenomenal forms* of the ultimate Reality they do have "boundaries."

> The (Way) which in itself has no "boundary" appears as having "boundaries" (if we look at it on the level of the "thing"), just as the ("things" that are separated from each other by) "boundaries" appear as having no "boundaries" (if we look at them from the viewpoint of the absolute Way).[128]

Thus we see that the concept of "boundary" or "essence," like many of the key-concepts of Taoism, is not of a static nature. It is of a dynamic nature in the sense that it shifts its semantic value as we, on our part, shift the angle of vision.

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[128] *Ibid.*

Properly speaking, the third ontological stage is the last one, and there can be no further stage below it. As a matter of fact, however, the human mind, deceived and misled by the wrong view of the "essence" which has just been mentioned, has come to create one more level of things, namely, that of "values." In the structure of Chuang-tzŭ's world-view, this constitutes the fourth ontological level.

> As soon as, however, "right" and "wrong" make their appearance, the Way becomes damaged. And as soon as the Way is thus damaged, Love is born.[129]

Up to the third stage, everything has been, so to speak, an event taking place within the Way. Even the third stage itself is, as we have just remarked, a stage in the self-evolvement of the Way. The three stages are all authentically ontological stages. The fourth, on the contrary, has nothing to do with the objective structure of the Reality. It is a product of the human mind. It is, in this sense, a pseudo-ontological stage.

At this (pseudo) ontological stage, the "essences" which, at the previous stage, have been completely fossilized into stiff and inflexible forms, are further classified into valuational categories: "right" and "wrong," "good" and "bad," "beautiful" and "ugly," etc. And the "chaotic" reality of the Way becomes thereby damaged and injured.

This results in the birth of Love, that is, the appearance of human emotions like love and hate, like and dislike, etc. This aspect of the problem has already been analyzed in the earlier part of the present paper.

We have been trying to describe the structure of the Taoist world-view in terms of the "descending" movement of the Way. This aspect of the world-view may rightly be regarded as the "creative" process of the Way. Its stages correspond to the stages of the psychological

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[129] *Ibid.*

process by which the contemplative, leaving behind himself the state of complete "oblivion," gradually comes back to the normal state of consciousness.

But the contemplative who has thus come back to his normal mental activity again goes back — "ascends" — toward the state of ecstasy. In the same way, the Way which has spread itself out as innumerable "things" goes back to its own original Unity. The "descent" is followed by its reversal, the "ascent." The phenomenal forms, after flourishing in an exuberance of colors and forms for a while, takes an ascending course toward their pre-phenomenal Origin. This is the concept of "return" (*fu*). As Lao-tzŭ says:[130]

> The ten thousand things come into being all together. But as I watch them, they "return" again (to their Origin).
>
> Thus things grow up exuberantly, luxuriantly, but (when the time comes) they all "return" to their "roots."
>
> The "return" to the "root" is to be called "stillness." And this, again, is to be called the "return" to the (Heavenly) Command. The "return" to the Command is to be called the eternal Reality. And to know this eternal Reality is to be called "illumination."

The Way in its ultimate state reposes in an absolute "stillness" and "tranquillity." A cosmic movement comes out of the depth of this "stillness." And after reaching the final limit where there is nothing observable but a luxuriance of divergent forms, it goes back to the original metaphysical "stillness."

All this is the continuous activity of the Way. And it thus forms a cyclic or circular process. And being circular, it has neither beginning nor end.

> Deep, deep indeed, it is like the ocean! Lofty, lofty indeed, it is like a mountain! At the very point where it comes to an end, it again begins to move.[131]

Thus we find ourselves in the presence of an Oriental counterpart

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[130] *Op. cit.*, XLI.

[131] *Chuang-tzŭ* (E), XXII, p. 582.

of the *panta rhei* of Heraclitus. The Reality itself is eternally and constantly in movement. And, therefore, all things are in a state of flux. The movement of the Way forms an ontological flow of an infinity of things from No-Beginning to No-End. Everything is changing from moment to moment. But through this universal flow of things there runs Something which remains eternally itself, changing and yet unchanging, moving and yet tranquil.

> The Way has neither Beginning nor End. (But in the course of this eternal and circular flow), individual things die and are born. The perfection (of these ever-flowing things) cannot be relied upon (i.e., is not an absolute perfection). Being empty now, full at the next moment, nothing remains in one state even for a moment.
>
> The years cannot be kept back; time cannot be stopped. Now decaying, then alive; now replete, then empty; ending is immediately followed by beginning. (Such is the interminable flow of all things). And only when one realizes this truth, is one in a position to talk about the law of Great Righteousness (*ta i*, i.e., the Way which is absolutely "righteous")[132] and discuss the principle governing the course of the ten thousand things.
>
> The life (i.e., existence in this world) of things is like a horse galloping and rushing along. With every movement they change; at every moment they shift.
>
> What could you at all do (against this universal change of things)? (Whatever you may do) everything will go on naturally transforming itself.[133]

[132] Ironical reference to the Confucian concept of "righteousness" (*i*) which is but a "petty" kind of "righteousness."

[133] *Chuang-tzŭ* (E), XVII, p. 585.

THE STRUCTURE OF SELFHOOD IN ZEN BUDDHISM

ERANOS 38
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I

Preliminaries

The general theme of the Eranos lectures this year is the Image of Man. In the minds of those who are at all familiar with the history of Zen Buddhism, the phrase — *the image of man* — will immediately evoke the name of a great Zen master of the T'ang dynasty, Lin Chi (J.: Rinzai).[1] For throughout the whole history of Zen Buddhism, he was the one who made the "image of man" the very basis of all his sayings and doings. Everything in his system turns around the axis of Man, and the whole spirit of Zen in his view is to be grasped at this precise point.

Buddhism itself may properly be said to have been concerned from its very historical beginning with the problem of Man, and that exclusively. The starting-point of Buddha's search after the Truth was provided by the disquieting miseries of human existence as he observed them around himself. And the doctrines which he developed after his attainment to enlightenment were through and through human, humane and humanitarian. Buddhist philosophy which began to develop shortly after his death was also "human" in the sense that it was seriously concerned with the concept of "non-ego" as one of

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The theme of Eranos 38 (1969), that is, the 38th Eranos Conference Yearbook, which is the compilation of lectures given at the Eranos Conference in 1969, was "Sinn und Wandlungen des Menschenbildes."

its most fundamental problems. Here again we observe Man being made an object of philosophical consideration in the particular form of the problematic of "ego."

This anthropo-centric tendency of Buddhism was greatly fortified by the rise and development of the Zen sect. By making the actual experience of enlightenment the pivotal point of the world-view, Zen raised, or reformulated, the traditional problem of Man as the problem of the absolute selfhood. We must observe in this connection, however, that Zen raises the question in a very characteristic way. Instead of posing his question concerning Man in an Aristotelian form: "What is man?" the Zen Buddhist directly begins by asking: "Who am I?"[2] What is at issue is not the classical problem of the nature of Man in general, but an infinitely more personal and intimate one of *who* is this very human subject who, existing as he does here and now in a timespace system, raises the question about his own self. It will be only natural that the image of Man which is obtained on the basis of such an attitude should be something totally different from an image of Man which forms itself in the mind of an objective observer who would approach the problem by first asking:

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[1]Lin Chi I Hsüan (J.: Rinzai Gigen, d. 867). A disciple of the famous Huang Po (J.: Ōbaku, d. 850), and himself the founder of one of the so-called Five Houses of Zen Buddhism (the Lin Chi school), Lin Chi was one of the greatest Zen masters not only of the T'ang dynasty but of all ages. His basic teachings, practical and theoretical, are recorded in a book known under the title of "The Sayings and Doings of Lin Chi" (*Lin Chi Lu*, J.: *Rinzai Roku*), a work compiled by his disciples after his death. In the present paper, all quotations from this book are made from the modern scientific edition by Seizan Yanagida, Kyoto, 1961.

[2]It is highly significant in this connection that one of the leading Zen masters of the present age, Mumon Yamada, has produced a book entitled "Who Am I?" *Watashi-wa Dare-ka*? (Tokyo, 1966). The book is a modern interpretation of the First Part of the above-mentioned "Sayings and Doings of Lin Chi." In this work the author raises and discusses the problem of Man as formulated in this personal form as one of the most pressing problems which contemporary men must face in the present-day situation of the world.

"What is man?"

Every one of us, as a human being, has self-consciousness and is conscious of other human beings surrounding him. Hence it naturally comes about that at the level of ordinary existence all of us possess a more or less definite idea as to what kind of a thing man is. The classical Western philosophy going back to Aristotle elaborates and defines this common-sense image of man as a "rational animal."

The image of Man peculiar to Zen Buddhism emerges exactly when such a common-sense image of man, be it pre-philosophical or philosophical, is smashed to pieces. The ordinary image of man on which our daily life is based, and on which our social life is carried out, does not, according to the typically Zen conception, represent the true reality of Man. For man, as pictured in such a way, is but a "thing" in the sense that it is nothing but an objectified man, i.e., man as an object. Such cannot be a true picture because, according to Zen, Man in his true reality is, and must be, an absolute selfhood.

Without tarrying on the plane of common-sense or empirical thinking, where the primary experience of Reality in its pure "is-ness"[3] is necessarily broken up into objectified pieces, including even the absolute ego, Zen proposes to grasp directly Man as an absolute selfhood prior to his being objectified into a "thing." Only then, it maintains, can we hope to obtain a true image of Man representing him as he really is, that is, in his real, immediate "is-ness."

The image of Man peculiar to Zen is thus derived from a dimension which absolutely transcends the bifurcation, so characteristic of the human intellect, of the subject and object. As will be easy to see, such an image of Man can never be obtained as long as we pursue the question in the form of "what is man?" The question must necessarily and inevitably take on the form of "who am I?" Otherwise expressed, Man must be intuited in his most intimate subjectivity. For, no matter how far we may go on searching after our own "self"

[3]Or "suchness" (*tathatā*) as the Buddhists would call it.

on the plane of intellectual analysis, the "self" goes on being objectified. However far we may go in this direction, we always end up by obtaining the image of our "self" seen as an object. The "self" itself, the real subjective subject which goes on searching after itself, remains always beyond our reach, eluding forever our grasp. The pure subjectivity is reached only when man steps beyond the ken of the dichotomizing activity of intellect, ceases to look at his own "self" from the outside as an object, and *becomes* immediately his own "self." The *Zazen*, "sitting cross-legged in meditation," is a way specifically devised in order that the subject might delve ever deeper into its own interior so that the bifurcated "self" — the "self" as dichotomized into the "self" as subject and the "self" as object — might regain its own original unity. When, at the extremity of such a unity, man becomes truly himself and turns into a pure and absolute selfhood, when, in other words, there remains absolutely no distinction any longer between the "self" *qua* subject and the "self" *qua* object, an epistemological stage is reached where the "self" has become so perfectly identified with itself and has so completely become one with itself that it has transcended even being a "self." The precise point at which the "self" becomes one with it-"self" in such an absolute manner has come to be known, in accordance with the technical terminology of Dōgen,[4] "the-mind-and-body-dropping-off" (*shin jin datsu raku*). This is immediately followed by the next stage — to be more strictly exact, it is a stage which is actualized at the very same moment as the actualization of the first one — that of "the-dropped-off-mind-and-body" (*datsu raku shin jin*). This second stage refers to the experiential fact that the moment the mind-and-body,

[4]Dōgen (1200–1253) is one of the greatest Zen masters Japan has ever produced. His major work *Shōbōgenzō* is a record of his deep reflections on matters pertaining to Man and the world from the Zen point of view. Besides, it is perhaps the most philosophical of all works written by the Zen masters, whether of China or Japan.

i.e., the "self," falls off into Nothingness, there is resuscitated out of the Nothingness the same mind-and-body, i.e., the same old "self" itself, but this time completely transformed into an absolute Self. The "self" thus resuscitated from its death to itself still carries outwardly the same mind-and-body, but the latter is the mind-and-body that has once "dropped off," that is, that has transcended itself once for all. The image of Man in Zen Buddhism is an image of Man who has already passed through such an absolute transformation of himself, the "True Man without any ranks" as Lin Chi calls him.

It is evident that such an image of Man as has just been sketched implicitly occupied in Zen Buddhism a place of cardinal importance throughout its entire history. This is evident because from the very beginning Zen centered around the radical and drastic transformation of Man from the relative into the absolute selfhood. The peculiar image of Man was but a natural product of the special emphasis which Zen laid on the experience of enlightenment.

Explicitly, however, and in terms of the history of *thought*, the concept or image of Man did not occupy a key-position in Zen Buddhism prior to the appearance of Lin Chi. Before him, Man had always remained in the background. The image had always been there implicitly, but not explicitly. "Man" had never played the role of a keyterm in the history of Zen thought before Lin Chi. Rather, the real key-terms had been words like Mind, Nature, (Transcendental) Wisdom, Reality (or Absolute — *dharma*) and the like, all of which were directly or indirectly of an Indian origin and which, therefore, inevitably had a strong flavor of Indian metaphysics.

With the appearance of Lin Chi, however, the whole picture begins to assume an entirely different, unprecedented aspect. For Lin Chi sets out to put Man at the very center of Zen thought, and to build up around this center an extremely vigorous and dynamic world-view. The image of Man as absolute selfhood which, as we have seen, had always been there implicitly — hidden, so to speak, behind the scenes — was suddenly brought out by Lin Chi into the dazzlingly bright luster on the main stage. At the same time we

witness here the birth of a *thought*[5] which is truly original and indigenous to the Chinese soil.

Lin Chi's thought is characteristically Chinese in that it puts Man at the very center of a whole world-view, and that, further, his conception of Man is extremely realistic to the extent of being almost pragmatic. It is pragmatic in the sense that it always pictures Man as the most concrete individual who exists at this very place and at this very moment, eating, drinking, sitting and walking around, or even "attending to his natural wants." "O Brethren in the Way," he says in one of his discourses, "you must know that there is in the reality of Buddhism nothing extraordinary for you to perform. You just live as usual without ever trying to do anything particular, attending to your natural wants, putting on clothes, eating meals, and lying down if you feel tired. Let the ignorant people laugh at me. The wise men know what I mean to say."[6]

This pragmatic Man, however, is not at all an ordinary "man" as we represent him at the level of common-sense thinking, for he is a Man who has come back to this world of phenomena from the dimension of absolute Reality. His is a two-dimensional personality. He, as a most concrete individual, living among the concretely existent things, does embody something supra-individual. He is an individual who is a supra-individual — two persons fused into a perfect unity of one single person. "Do you want to know who is our (spiritual) ancestor, Buddha (i.e., the Absolute)? He is no other than yourself who are here and now listening to my discourse!" (Lin Chi)[7] The world-view

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[5]We would like to put emphasis on the word "thought," because insofar as the personal experience of enlightenment is concerned, we cannot see any real difference among the representative Zen masters. Lin Chi's teacher, Huang Po, for instance, was evidently as great (if not greater) a master as Lin Chi himself. But the *thought* which Huang Po develops in his work, *The Transmission of the Mind*, is admittedly fairly commonplace, showing no particular originality of its own.

[6]*Lin Chi Lu*, 36, p. 60.

[7]*Ibid.*, 28, p. 40.

presented by Lin Chi is a very peculiar view of the world as seen through the eyes of such a two-dimensional person. But in order to have a real understanding of the nature of this kind of world-view, we must go back to our starting-point and try to analyze the whole problem in a more theoretical way. In so doing, our emphasis will be laid on two cardinal points: (1) the epistemological structure of the process by which such a double-natured person comes into being, and (2) the metaphysical structure of the world as it appears to his eyes.

II

The Functional Relationship between Subject and Object

The most fundamental philosophical assertion which is made by Zen at the outset is that there is a functional relationship between the subject and the object, the knower and the known. Zen begins by recognizing a very close correlation between the state of consciousness of the subject and the state of the objective world which the subject perceives. This correlation between subject and object is of an extremely subtle, delicate, and dynamic nature, so much so that the slightest move on the part of the subject necessarily induces a change on the part of the object, however slight it might be.

The observation of this point, trivial though it may look at first glance, is in reality of paramount importance for a right understanding of Zen Buddhism, whether practical or philosophical. For both the practice of Zen in its entirety and its philosophical elaboration hinge upon such a relationship between subject and object. It is no less important to observe that in this correlation between subject and object, or the ego and the world, Zen — and, for that matter, Buddhism in general — always recognizes the former, i.e., the subject or the ego, to be the determining factor. The particular state in which the perceiving subject happens to be, determines the state or nature of the object which is perceived. A particular existential mode of the

subject actualizes the whole world in a particular form corresponding to it. The phenomenal world rises before the eyes of an observer in accordance with the latter's inner mode of being. In brief, the structure of the subject determines the structure of the world of objective things.

Consequently, if we feel, vaguely or definitely, that the world as we actually observe it is not the real world, that the phenomenal things which we see are not being seen in their true reality, then we will have only to do something about the very structure of our own consciousness. And that exactly is what Zen Buddhism proposes that we should do.

A famous Zen master of the T'ang dynasty, Nan Ch'üan[8] (J.: Nansen), is said to have remarked, pointing with his finger to a flower blooming in the courtyard: "The ordinary people see this flower as if they were in a dream." If the flower as we actually see it in the garden is to be likened to a flower seen in a dream, we have only to wake up from the dream in order to see the flower as it *really* is. And this simply means that a total personal transformation is required on the part of the subject, if the latter wants to see the reality of things. But what kind of transformation? And what will be the reality of things seen by us after such transformation?

What Nan Ch'üan himself wants to convey by his statement is quite clear. He means to say that a flower as seen by the ordinary people under normal conditions is an *object* standing before the perceiving *subject*. This precisely is what Nan Ch'üan indicates by his expression: "a flower seen in a dream." Here the flower is represented as something different from the man who is looking at it. The flower in its true reality, however, is, according to Nan Ch'üan, a flower which is not distinguished, which is not distinguishable, from the man who sees it, the subject. What is at issue here is a state which is neither subjective nor objective, but which is, at the same time both subjective and objective — a state in which the subject and object,

[8]Nan Ch'üan P'u Yüan (J.: Nansen Fugan, 748–835).

the man and the flower, become fused in an indescribably subtle way into an absolute unity.

In order, however, to go a step further into the core of the problem which we are dealing with in the present chapter, we must replace Nan Ch'üan's words into their original context. It is found in a celebrated textbook of Zen Buddhism, *Pi Yen Lu*.[9] It reads as follows:

Once the high official Lu Kêng (J.: Riku Kō)[10] was holding a conversation with Nan Ch'üan, when Lu remarked: "Sêng Chao[11] once said: 'The heaven and earth (i.e., the whole universe) is of one and the same root as my own self, and all things are one with me.' This I find pretty difficult to understand." Thereupon Nan Ch'üan, pointing with his finger at a flower blooming in the courtyard, and calling Lu's attention to it, remarked: "The ordinary people see this flower as if they were in a dream!"

The whole context clarifies Nan Ch'üan's intention. It is as though he said, "Look at that flower blooming in the courtyard. The flower itself is expressing with its very existence the fact that all things are completely one with our own selves in the fundamental unity of Ultimate Reality. The Truth stands there naked, wholly apparent. It

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[9]J.: *Heki Gan Roku* ("Blue Rock Records"), a work of the eleventh century (Sung dynasty), Koan No. 40.

[10]Lu Kêng (764–834) was a high official of the T'ang dynasty who occupied a very important position in the administrative machinery of the central government. In Zen Buddhism he was a lay disciple of Nan Ch'üan.

[11]Sêng Chao (J.: Sōjō, 374–414), known as "the monk Chao." A Taoist at first, he later turned to Mahāyāna Buddhism under the direction of the famous Kumārajīva (344–413), who came from Central Asia to China in 401 and who translated many of the Buddhist Sūtras and theoretical works on Buddhism from Sanskrit to Chinese. The monk Chao is counted among the greatest of Kumārajīva's disciples. Chao, though he died at the age of 31, left a number of important works on Buddhist philosophy. His interpretation of the concept of Nothingness or "Void" in particular, which was Taoistic to a considerable extent, exercised a tremendous influence on the rise and development of Zen in China. He is rightly regarded as one of the predecessors of Zen Buddhism.

is, at every moment and in every single thing, disclosing itself so clearly and so straightforwardly. Yet, alas, the ordinary people do not possess the eye to see the naked Reality. They see every thing only through veils."

Since, in this way, the ordinary people see everything through the veils of their own relative and determined ego, whatever they see is seen in a dreamlike fashion. But they themselves are firmly convinced that the flower as they actually see it as an "object" in the external world *is* reality. In order to be able to say that such a vision of the flower is so far away from the naked reality that it is almost a dream, they must have their empirical ego transformed into something else. Only then will they be able to assert with full confidence with the monk Chao that "the object is no other than the subject itself" and that "the object and the subject become fused in an indescribably subtle and delicate way into one, and ultimately become reduced to the original ground of Nothingness."

The mysterious fusion of subject and object which the monk Chao talks about would require a great deal of further elucidation before it will disclose to us its real meaning. This will be done in detail presently. For the time being let us be content with simply pointing out that even a flower in the garden will appear differently in accordance with different stages on which the mind of the observer happens to be. In order to see in a single flower a manifestation of the metaphysical unity of all things, not only of all the so-called objects but including even the observing subject, the empirical ego must have undergone a total transformation, a complete nullification of itself — death to its own "self," and rebirth on a totally different dimension of consciousness. For as long as there remains a self-subsistent "subject" which observes from outside the "object," the realization of such a metaphysical unity is utterly inconceivable. How would it otherwise be possible that a flower, remaining always a concrete individual flower here and now, be your own self, or, for that matter, be the same as anything else? Thus, to come back to our earlier simple statement, the world discloses itself to your eyes in exact

accordance with the actual state of your consciousness.

Even without going to the utmost degree of spiritual experience such as has just been mentioned in connection with Nan Ch'üan's remark on a flower in the courtyard, the same type of correlation between subject and object is easily observable at the level of our daily life. For that purpose let us begin by making a very commonplace observation. It is a matter of ordinary experience that the world, or anything in the world, appears differently to different persons in accordance with different points of view or different interests they happen to have with regard to the things. The fact is not without some philosophical significance.

Bertrand Russell, for instance, has actually made an observation of this sort the starting-point for an exposition of his philosophical ideas in his *The Problems of Philosophy*.[12] In ordinary life, we often speak of *the* color of a table, assuming that it is of one definite color everywhere and for everybody. On a closer scrutiny, however, we find that such is not the case. There is, he argues, no definite color which is *the* color of the table. For it evidently appears to be of different colors from different points of view. And no two persons can see it from exactly the same point of view. Moreover, "even from a given point of view the color will seem different by artificial light, or to a color-blind man, or to a man wearing blue spectacles, while in the dark there will be no color at all."

What Zen Buddhism tries to bring home to us at the very first stage would seem structurally no different from this kind of daily experience. However, there is in fact a fundamental difference between the two positions. The Zen Buddhist is not interested in the shift of viewpoints or the kinds of interest from which an object may be looked at, while the "subject" remains always on one and the same level of daily experience. Rather, he is thinking of two totally different dimensions of consciousness; that is, he is interested in a sudden, abrupt shift on the part of the perceiving subject from the dimension

[12]Bertrand Russell : *The Problems of Philosophy*, Oxford, 1954, pp. 8–9.

of daily consciousness to that of supra-consciousness.

The fact that one and the same thing seems different in accordance with different points of view at the level of daily consciousness is of no vital concern to the Zen Buddhist. His problem lies elsewhere, or is of a different order. For he is concerned with the validity or invalidity of the law of identity, "*A* is *A*," which constitutes the primary basis of human life at the empirical level of existence. The Zen Buddhist questions the very validity of the proposition: "an apple is an apple."

In the view of a Zen Buddhist, personal and individual differences and discrepancies in the sensory experience of things are but events occurring all in one and the same epistemological dimension, that of daily or just normal kind of mental activity. And this dimension is the one in which our intellect or reason exercises at ease its natural functions: identification, differentiation and combination. The ultimate principle governing our entire mental activity in this dimension is "discrimination." Buddhism calls this basic function of the human mind *vikalpa*, the "discriminating cognition," in contradistinction to *prajñā*, "transcendental or non-discriminating cognition."

One and the same apple for example may very well appear differently to different persons. But, after all, the apple remains an apple. An apple *is* an apple, in accordance with the law of identity ("*A is A*"). And it cannot be something other than an apple, i.e., a non-apple, in accordance with the law of *non*-contradiction, ("*A* is not non-*A*"). However great the individual differences may be in the sensory experience of a thing, the thing is not supposed to step out of its own limited region. If, in the presence of an object, one person obtains the visual image of an apple while another sees a cat, for instance, either one of them must be in a state of hallucination.

The very first step taken by the *vikalpa* in the exercise of its natural function is to identify or recognize a thing as itself (the recognition of *A* as *A*) by discriminating or distinguishing it from all other things (all non-*A*s). An apple must be recognized and established as an apple. This identification based on discrimination is the basis and

startingpoint for all subsequent stages of mental activity. Without this basis, the whole world of our normal empirical experience would crumble to pieces and things would irremediably fall into utter disorder.

But, as we have remarked above, Zen Buddhism begins exactly by pointing out the questionability of the law of identity. To look at an apple as an apple is to see that thing from the very outset in the state of a particular delimitation. To see *A* as *A* is to delimit it to *A*-ness and put it into a fixed, unchangeable state of identity in such a way that it might not be anything other than *A*. Thus the normal empirical approach to the world is, scholastically, nothing other than outspoken "essentialism" in that it recognizes as the most basic and self-evident fact that *A* is *A* because of its *A*-ness, i.e., its "essence" of being *A*.

The *A*-ness, or so-called "essence" of *A* as understood in this sense, that is in the sense of the solidly fixed ontological core which unalterably determines the essential limits of a thing, was known in Buddhism in general as *svabhāva*, "self-essence" or "self-nature." All schools in Buddhism, from the earliest periods of its philosophical development, consistently fought against this type of approach to the world, and denounced it as *loka-vyavahāra*, "worldly habit."[13] A dictum which was recognized already in primitive Buddhism to be one of the three basic tenets of Buddha's teaching runs (in Pali): *Sabbe dhammā anattā*, i.e., "All things are ego-less," meaning that nothing of all existent things has a *svabhāva*, i.e., self-subsistent and permanently fixed essence.

But here again Zen Buddhism recognizes the primacy of the state of the mind, and sees the determining factor in the particular structure of the perceiving subject. Each one of the things of the world, whether internal or external, is seen to have its own solidly fixed

[13]A similar opposition against philosophical "essentialism" is observable in the relation of Taoism to Confucianism. See my Eranos paper on "The Absolute and the Perfect Man in Taoism," *Eranos Jahrbuch* XXXVI, 1967, pp. 384–411 in particular. [Editor's note: See volume I, pp. 6–40.]

essence because the mind so sees it, because the mind "essentializes." Essences are perceived everywhere by the mind, not because they are objectively there, but simply because the mind is by nature productive of essences. It is the mind that furnishes a thing with this or that particular essence. Even in the domain of daily experience, we sometimes become aware of the fact that we are actually giving various "essences" to one and the same thing. An apple, for example, is not necessarily always seen as an "apple." In fact, it is sometimes seen as a "fruit"; sometimes as a special "form," or "mass of color." Sometimes we do treat an apple simply as a "thing."

The Zen viewpoint, however, insists on going still further. For no matter how many essences a thing may assume in our view, it always remains in the domain of essentialist cognition. According to Zen, it is not enough that an apple should not be seen *as* an apple; it should not be seen *as* anything whatsoever. Positively stated, an apple should be seen without any delimitation. It must be seen in its indetermination. But in order that the apple be seen in such a way, we as the perceiving subjects, must see the apple with *wu hsin*, a Chinese technical term meaning literally "no-mind." Only when we approach anything with the "no-mind," does the thing reveal to our eyes its original reality. At the ultimate limit of all negations, that is, the negation of all the essences conceivable of the apple, all of a sudden the extraordinary reality of the apple flashes into our mind. This is what is known in Buddhism as the emergence of *prajñā*, transcendental or non-discriminating consciousness. And in and through this experience, the apple again manifests itself *as* an apple in the fullest density of existence, in the "original freshness of the first creation of the heaven and earth."

All this is actualized only through our actualizing the state of "no-mind." The actualization of the "no-mind" itself is the pivotal point of the whole system. In the following chapter we shall take up this problem as our special topic.

III

Consciousness and Supra-Consciousness

At the end of the preceding chapter mention was made of the "no-mind" as the subjective source or basis for the non-essentialist type of world view. The "no-mind," *wu hsin*, which may be translated in a more explanatory manner as a "mind which is no mind," "mind which exists as a non-existent mind," or "mind which is in the state of Nothingness," is not to be understood in a purely negative sense as the mind in the state of torpidity and inertness or sheer ecstasy.[14] Quite the contrary, the "no-mind" is a psychological state in which the mind finds itself at the highest point of tension, a state in which the mind works with utmost intensity and lucidity. As an oft-used Zen expression goes: the consciousness illumines itself in the full glare of its own light. In this state, the mind knows its object so perfectly that there is no longer any consciousness left of the object; that the mind is not even conscious of its knowing the object.

The "no-mind" has in fact played an exceedingly important formative role in the cultural history both of China and Japan. In Japan the main forms of fine art, like poetry, painting, calligraphy, etc., have developed their original types more or less under the influence of the spirit of the "no-mind." Many anecdotes, real and fictitious, have been handed down: for example, of black-and-white painters whose brush moves on the surface of paper as if of its own accord, without the artist being conscious of the movement the brush makes; or of master musicians who, when they play the harp, feel that it is not they themselves who play the music, but that it is as though the music played itself.

The example of a master musician absorbed in playing his harp

[14]This latter psychological state is called in Zen "dwelling in the cave of devils under the mountain of darkness." Zen never wearies of reminding us that we should avoid falling unconsciously into such a cave.

will be good enough to give at least some idea as to what kind of a thing Zen Buddhism is thinking of when it talks about the "no-mind." The musician is so completely absorbed in his act of playing, he is so completely one with the harp and music itself, that he is no longer conscious of the individual movements of his fingers, of the instrument which he is playing, not even of the very fact that he is engaged in playing. In reference to such a situation, no one would say, except figuratively or in a loose sense, that the musician is "unconscious." For he *is* conscious. Rather, his consciousness is at the utmost limit of self-illumination. The aesthetic tension of his mind runs so high throughout his whole being that he himself is the music he is playing. Paradoxical as it may sound, he is so fully conscious of himself as identified with music that he is not "conscious" of his act of playing in any ordinary sense of the word. In order to distinguish such a state of consciousness from both "consciousness" and "unconsciousness" as ordinarily understood, we would use in this paper the word "supra-consciousness."

These and similar cases of "creative" activity that are known not only in the Far East but almost in every culture in the world are instances of the actualization of the "no-mind" at the level of ordinary life. But at this level, the actualization of the "no-mind" is but a sporadic and rather unusual phenomenon. What Zen purports to do is to make man cultivate in himself the state of "no-mind" in such a systematic way that it might become his *normal* state of consciousness, that he might begin to see everything, the whole world of Being, from the vantage point of such a state of consciousness.

It is to the supra-consciousness thus understood — not in its limited application to aesthetic experience, but as developed into the normal state of an absolute Selfhood — that the famous words of the Diamond Sūtra refer:[15]

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[15] *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra.* This Sūtra, first translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Kumārajīva (cf. above, note 11), exercised a tremendous influence on the philosophical elaboration of Zen Buddhism, particularly from the

Evam apraṣṭhitaṃ cittam utpādayitavyaṃ
Yan na kvacit-praṣṭhitaṃ cittam utpādayitavyam
(One should never let an abiding mind emerge;
A mind thus non-abiding one should let emerge.)

The *praṣṭhitaṃ cittam* "abiding mind" means a mind abiding by something, i. e., sticking to "objects." Instead of letting, the Sūtra says, emerge such an "essentializing" consciousness, one should raise a mind that does not adhere to any "object" in its essential delimitation. This is tantamount to saying that it is not enough for us to suppress the rise of, or nullify, the object-making consciousness; that we should more positively let a particular kind of mind emerge which, though fully conscious of itself as well as of the external things, does not recognize any self-subsistent essences in them. This is what we call supra-consciousness. And this is no other than the "no-mind" by which we started our discussion in the present chapter.

The preceding explanation may have succeeded in giving a vague general idea regarding the nature of the supra-consciousness. But it has certainly clarified neither its philosophical structure nor the psychological process by which one reaches such a state of the mind. So let us go back once again to the daily level of ontological experience and begin by analyzing the structure of cognition that is typical of that level, with a view to understanding on the basis of that analysis the fundamental metaphysico-epistemological make-up of the supra-consciousness.

IV

The Structure of the Empirical Ego

From the point of view of Zen Buddhism, the "essentialist" tendency of the empirical ego is not admissible not only because it posits

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time of the sixth Patriarch of Zen, Hui Nêng (J.: Enō, 638–713). The Sūtra centers around the Nothingness and "egolessness" of all things.

everywhere "objects" as permanent substantial entities, but also, and particularly, because it posits itself, the empirical ego, as an ego-substance. It not only sticks or adheres to the external "objects" as so many irreducible realities, but it clings to its own self as an even more irreducible, self-subsistent reality. This is what we have come to know as the "abiding mind" (*praṣṭhitam cittam*). And a whole world-view is built up upon the sharp opposition between the "abiding mind," i.e., the "subject," and its "objects." This dichotomy of reality into subject and object, man and the external world, is the foundation of all our empirical experiences. Of course even common-sense is ready to admit that the phenomenal world, including both the external things and the personal ego, is in a state of constant flux. But it tends to see within or behind this transiency of all things some elements which remain permanently unchangeable and substantial. Thus is created an image of the world of Being as a realm of self-identical objects, even the so-called "subject" being strictly speaking in such a view nothing but one of the "objects." It is precisely this kind of ontological view that Zen Buddhism is firmly determined to destroy once for all in order to replace it by another ontology based upon an entirely different sort of epistemology.

For a better understanding of the world-view which is peculiar to the supra-consciousness, let us, first, take up the normal type of world-view which is most natural and congenial to the human mind, and analyze its inner structure at a philosophical level.

Two stages or forms may conveniently be distinguished within the confines of such a world-view. The first is typically represented by Cartesian dualism standing on the fundamental dichotomy of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. As a philosophy, it may be described as an ontological system based on the dualistic tension between the two "substances" that are irreducible to one another. As a world-view, it may appropriately be described as one in which man, i.e., the ego, is looking at things from the outside, he himself being in the position of a spectator. He is not subjectively involved in the events that take place among various things before his own eyes. Man is here a detached

onlooker confronting a world of *external* objects. A whole ontological scenery is spread out before him, and he, as an independent personal "subject," is merely enjoying the colorful view on the stage of the world. This is a view which is the farthest removed from the reality of the things as they reveal themselves to the eyes of the supra-consciousness.

The second stage may conveniently be represented by the Heideggerian idea of the "being-within-the-world," particularly in the state of the ontological *Verfallenheit*. Unlike the situation we have just observed in the first stage of the dichotomous world-view, man is here subjectively, vitally involved in the destiny of the things surrounding him. Instead of remaining an objective spectator looking from the outside at the world as something independent of him, man, the ego, finds himself in the very midst of the world, directly affecting him and being directly affected by him. He is no longer an outsider enjoying with self-complacency what is going on on the stage of the theater. He himself *is* on the stage, he *exists* in the world, actively participating in the play, undergoing an undefinable existential anxiety which is the natural outcome of such a position.

The common-sense world-view at this second stage is far closer to Zen than the first stage. Yet, the empirical world-view, whether of the first or the second stage, is strictly speaking totally different from the Zen world-view with regard to its basic structure. For the empirical world-view is a world-view worked out by the intellect that can properly exercise its function only where there is a distinction made between *ego* and *alter*. The whole mechanism stands on the conviction, whether explicit or implicit, of the independent existence of the ego-substance which stands opposed to external substantial objects. Whether the subject be represented as being outside the world of objects or inside, this very basic Cartesian opposition is, from the standpoint of Zen, something to be demolished before man begins to see the reality of himself and of the so-called external objects.

In truth, however, even in the midst of this empirical view of the things there is hidden something like a metaphysical principle which

is, though invisible, constantly at work, ready to be realized at any moment through the human mind to transform the normal view of the world into something entirely different. This hidden principle of the metaphysico-epistemological transformation of reality is called in Buddhism *tathāgata-garbha*, the "Womb of the absolute Reality." But in order to see the whole structure from this particular point of view, we shall have to submit it to a more detailed and more theoretical analysis.[16]

The epistemological relation of the ego to the object in the ordinary empirical world-view may be represented by the formula: $s \rightarrow o$, which may be read as: *i see this.*

In this and the following formula, be it remarked at the outset, the words written entirely with italicized small letters (like *i, see, this*) shall refer to things and events pertaining to the dimension of ordinary consciousness, while those written with capital letters (like *I, SEE, THIS*) shall refer to the dimension of supra-consciousness. And the word *SEE* is supposed to be a literal translation of the Chinese word *chien* appearing in the celebrated phrase *chien hsing* "seeing into one's nature."

Thus in the formula just given, the grammatical subject, *s*, represents the ego-consciousness of man at the level of empirical experience. It refers to the awareness of selfhood as *Da-sein* in the literal sense of "being-there" as a subject in front of, or in the midst of, the objective world. The *i* is here an independently subsistent ego-substance. As long as the empirical ego remains on the empirical dimension, it is conscious of itself only as being there as an independent center of all its perceptions, thinkings and bodily actions. It has no awareness at all of its being something more than that.

However, from the viewpoint of Zen which intuits everywhere and in everything the act of the *tathāgata-garbha*, the "Womb of the

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[16]In the following analysis we shall utilize certain formulae — with considerable modifications — that have been proposed by Professor Tsūji Satō in his *Bukkyō Tetsuri* ("Philosophical Principles of Buddhism"), Tokyo, 1968.

absolute Reality," there is perceivable, behind each individual *i*, Something whose activity may be expressed by the formula $(S \rightarrow)$ or (*I SEE*) the brackets indicating that this activity is still hidden at the empirical level of self-consciousness. Thus the structure of the empirical ego, *s*, in reality, that is, seen with the eye of Zen, must properly be represented by the formula:

$$(S \rightarrow) \; s$$

or: (*I SEE*) *myself.*

As we shall see later in more detail, the empirical ego, *s*, can be the real center of all its activities simply because that hidden Principle, $(S \rightarrow)$, is constantly functioning through *s*. The empirical ego can be selfhood only because every subjective movement it makes is in truth the actualization here and now of that Something which *is* the real Selfhood. The nature of the activity of (*I SEE*) may best be understood when it is put side by side with its Islamic parallel presented by *irfān* type of philosophy which finds an explicit reference to the same kind of situation in the words of God in the *Qur'ān*: "It was not you who threw when you did throw; it was (in reality) God who threw."[17] The important point, however, is that this state of affairs is at this level still completely hidden to, and remains unnoticed by, the empirical ego. The latter sees itself alone; it is totally unaware of the part between the brackets: $(S \rightarrow)$.

Exactly the same applies to the "objective" side of the epistemological relation (represented in the above-given formula by the small *o*). Here again the empirical ego has the awareness only of the presence of "things." The latter appear to the ego as self-subsistent entities that exist independently of itself. They appear as substances qualified by various properties, and as such they stand opposed to the

[17] *Qur'ān*, VIII, 17. This passage expresses exactly the same idea as the famous Tradition in which God Himself is the speaker and which runs: "I am his ears, his eye-sight, his tongue, his hands, and his feet. Thus it is through Me that he hears; it is through Me that he sees; it is through Me that he speaks; it is through Me that he grasps; and it is through Me that he walks."

perceiving subject which sees them from the outside. Viewed from the standpoint of the above-mentioned *prajñā*, the "transcendental cognition," however, a thing takes its rise as this or that thing before the eyes of the empirical ego simply by virtue of the activity of that very same Something, $(S \rightarrow)$, which, as we have seen, establishes the ego as an ego. A thing, *o*, comes to be established as the thing, *o*, itself as a concrete actualization of that Something. It is properly to be understood as a self-manifesting form of the same *tathāgata-garbha*, the "Womb of the absolute Reality" which is eternally and permanently active through all the phenomenal forms of the things.[18]

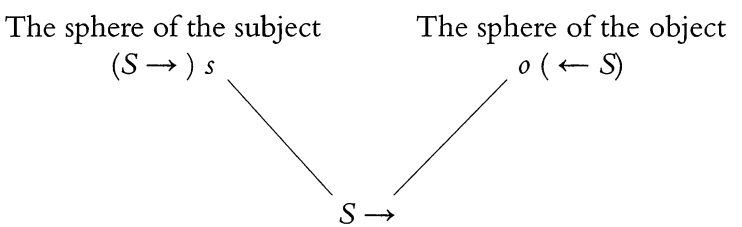
Thus the formula representing the inner structure of *o* must assume a more analytic form:

$$(S \rightarrow)\ o$$

or: (*I See*) *this*.

This new formula is so designed as to indicate that here, too, *o* is the only thing which is externally manifested, but that behind this phenomenal form there lies hidden the activity of $(S \rightarrow)$, of which the empirical ego is still unaware.

In this way, the so-called subject-object relationship or the whole epistemological process by which a (seemingly) self-subsistent ego-substance perceives a (seemingly) self-subsistent object-substance, and which we have initially represented by the formula $s \rightarrow o$, must, if given in its fully developed form, be somewhat like this:



[18]This statement might look at this stage quite an arbitrary one. We shall be in a position to discuss its validity only at the end of our analysis of the whole process. Here the statement must be accepted as it as a merely phenomenological analysis of Zen psychology.

In this last formulation, the *s* or the empirical ego, which is but a particular actualization of ($S \rightarrow$), is put into a special active-passive relation with the "object" or *o*, which is also a particular actualization of the same ($S \rightarrow$). And the whole process is to be understood as a concrete actualization of *I SEE*, or $S \rightarrow$ without brackets. But even in the *I SEE* there is still noticeable a faint lingering trace of ego-consciousness. Zen emphatically requires that even such an amount of ego-consciousness should be erased from the mind, so that the whole thing be ultimately reduced to the simple act of *SEE* pure and simple. The word "no-mind" to which reference has been made refers precisely to the pure act of *SEE* in the state of an immediate and direct actualization, that is, the eternal Verb *SEE* without brackets.

We now begin to notice that the reality of what has been expressed by the formula: *i see this*, is of an extremely complicated structure at least when described analytically from the viewpoint of the empirical ego. The real metaphysico-epistemological situation which is covertly and implicitly indicated by the formula $s \rightarrow o$, turns out to be something entirely different from what we usually understand from the outward grammatical structure of the sentence. And the primary or most elementary aim of Zen Buddhism with regard to those who, being locked up in the magic circle of ontological dichotomy, cannot see beyond the surface meaning of $s \rightarrow o$ or *i see this* as suggested by its syntactic structure ("subject" → "act" → "object"), consists in attempting to break the spell of dualism and remove it from their minds, so that they might stand immediately face to face with what we have symbolically designated by the Verb *SEE*.

We may do well to recall at this point that Buddhism in general stands philosophically on the concept of *pratītyasamutpāda* (J.: *engi*) i.e., the idea that everything comes into being and exists as what it is by virtue of the infinite number of relations it bears to other things, each one of these "other things" owing again its seemingly self-subsistent existence to other things. Buddhism in this respect is philosophically a system based upon the category of *relatio*, in contrast to, say, the Platonic-Aristotelian system which is based on the category

of *substantia*.

A philosophical system which stands upon the category of *substantia* and which recognizes in substances the most basic ontological elements, almost inevitably tends to assume the form of essentialism.

What is meant by essentialism has roughly been outlined in an earlier context. Just to recapitulate the gist of the essentialist argument for the purpose of elucidating, by contrast, the nature of the position taken by Zen Buddhism, we might remark that the essentialist position sees on both the "subjective" and "objective" sides of the $s \rightarrow o$ type of situation self-subsistent substances, the boundaries of each of which are inalterably fixed and determined by its "essence." Here *o*, say, an apple, is a self-subsistent substance with a more or less strictly delimited ontological sphere, the delimitation being supplied by its own "essence," i.e., apple-ness. In the same manner, the ego which, as the subject, perceives the apple is an equally self-subsistent substance furnished with an "essence" which, in this case, happens to be its I-ness. Zen Buddhism summarizes the essentialist view through the succinct dictum: "Mountain is mountain, and river is river."

The position of *pratītyasamutpāda* stands definitely against this view. Such a view, Buddhism asserts, does nothing other than reflect the phenomenal surface of reality. According to the Buddhist view, it is not the case that there does exist in the external world a substance with a certain number of qualities, called "apple." The truth is rather that Something phenomenally appears to the subject as an "apple." The phenomenal appearance of the "apple" as an "apple" depends upon a certain positive attitude on the part of the subject. Conversely, however, the very fact that "apple" phenomenally appears as such to his eyes, establishes man as the perceiving ego. Zen describes this reciprocal relationship or determination between the subject and the object by saying: "Man sees the mountain; the mountain sees man."

The reality in the true sense of the word, therefore, is Something lying behind both the subject and object and making each of them emerge in its particular form, this as the subject and that as the object.

The ultimate principle governing the whole structure is Something which runs through the subject-object relationship, and which makes possible the very relationship to be actualized. It is this all-pervading, active principle that we want to indicate by the formula $S \rightarrow$, or rather in its ultimate form, the Verb *SEE*.

But again, the word "something" or "(ultimate) principle" must not mislead one into thinking that there be behind the veils of phenomena some metaphysical, supra-sensible Substance governing the mechanism of the phenomenal world. For there is, according to Zen, in reality nothing beyond, or other than, the phenomenal world. Zen does not admit the existence of a transcendental, supra-sensible order of things, which would subsist apart from the sensible world. The only point Zen Buddhism makes about this problem is that the phenomenal world is not just the sensible order of things as it appears to the ordinary empirical ego; that, rather, the phenomenal world as it discloses itself to the Zen consciousness is charged with a peculiar kind of dynamic power which may conveniently be indicated by the Verb *SEE*.

Thus what is meant by the *SEE* is not an absolute, transcendental Entity which in itself might be something keeping itself completely aloof from the phenomenal things. Rather, what is really meant thereby in Zen Buddhism is a dynamic field of power in its entirety and wholeness, an entire field which is neither exclusively subjective nor exclusively objective, but comprehending both the subject and the object in a peculiar state prior to its being bifurcated into these two terms. The verbal form itself of *SEE* may, at least vaguely, be suggestive of the fact that, instead of being a thing, be it an "absolute" thing or be it a "transcendental" substance, it is an *actus* charging an entire field with its dynamic energy. In terms of the previously introduced basic formula we might say that the whole process of *i see this* is itself the field of the Act of *SEE*. The real meaning of this statement, however, will be made clear only by our analyzing more in detail the basic inner structure of this dynamic field. That will be our task in the following pages.

V

"The Whole World is One Single Mind"

We have observed in the foregoing that the basic formula $s \rightarrow o$, or *i see this*, which is designed to describe schematically the epistemological relation between the perceiving subject and the object perceived, conceals in reality a far more complex mechanism than appears at first sight. For, according to the typically Buddhist analysis, at the back of *s* there is concealed $(S \rightarrow)$; at the back of *o* there is also $(S \rightarrow)$. And the whole thing, as we have observed, is ultimately to be reduced to the (outwardly) very simple but (inwardly) all-pervading and all-comprehensive act of *SEE*.

It often happens that this *SEE*, which is in Zen understanding nothing other than the absolute or ultimate Reality, makes itself felt in the mind of a man living on the empirical dimension of existence. The first symptom of the ultimate Reality breaking into the empirical dimension is observable in the fact that the man in such a situation begins to feel uneasy about the nature of the reality as he actually sees it. Although he is still completely locked up in the dichotomous world-view, he somehow begins to entertain a vague feeling that the true reality, both of himself and of the external things, must be something of an entirely different nature. He vaguely notices at the same time that he is actually undergoing all the tribulations and miseries of human existence simply because he cannot see the reality as he should. This phenomenon, of decisive importance both religiously and philosophically, is called in Chinese Buddhism *fa hsin* (J.: *hosh-shin*), meaning literally the raising of the mind, i.e., the raising of a deep and strong aspiration toward the enlightenment of Buddha. Philosophically, it is to be understood as the very first self-manifestation of the metaphysical $S \rightarrow$.

Once this beginning stage is actualized, the *Dasein* as it is naturally given loses, subjectively as well as objectively, its seeming solidity. It is felt that the *Dasein* in its empirical form is not the real form

of Being, that it is but a pseudo-reality. Urged by an irresistible drive pushing him from the pseudo-reality towards what he thinks to be the real reality, whatever and wherever it might be, man betakes himself to this or that way of possible salvation. Here Zen Buddhism proposes "sitting cross-legged in meditation" as the most authentic way for cultivating a special eye to see the reality as it really is in its original nakedness.

The "sitting cross-legged in meditation" is a somato-psychological posture by which the naturally centrifugal tendency of the mind might be curbed, and turned toward the opposite, i.e., centripetal, direction until finally the pseudo-ego loses itself in the realization of the true Selfhood which we have indicated by the formula $S \rightarrow$.

Zen asserts that this kind of somato-psychological posture is an absolute necessity for the realization of the true Selfhood, i.e., the state of absolute subjectivity, because the real "self" is never attainable through a purely mental process, be it representation, imagination, or thinking. For it is not a mere matter of cognition. The question is not "knowing" one's own true self, but rather "becoming" it. Unless one "becomes" one's own self, however far one may proceed along the successive stages of self-cognition, the self will not turn into an absolute Selfhood. For the real self will go on receding ever further; it will forever remain an "object," an object known or to be known. The self as a known object, to no matter how high a stage the cognition may belong, cannot by nature be pure subjectivity. In order to realize the self in a state of pure and absolute subjectivity, one has to "become" it, instead of merely "knowing" it. But in order to achieve this, the whole unity of "mind-body" — as suggested by the above-mentioned expression of Dōgen — must "drop off." The "sitting cross-legged in meditation" is, as Zen sees it, the best possible, if not the only possible, way of achieving, first, the unity of "mind-body," and then the unity itself "dropping off."

The expression: "the mind-body dropping off" means, in the more traditional Buddhist terminology, one's experiencing with his total being the epistemologico-metaphysical state of Nothingness (Skt.:

śūnyatā, Ch.: *k'ung*, J.: *kū*). But the word "Nothingness" as used in Zen Buddhism must be understood in a very peculiar sense.

"Nothingness" in this context, to begin with, refers to the last and ultimate stage in the actualization of Zen consciousness, at which the self, ceasing to set itself up as an "object" for itself, "becomes" the self itself, and that so thoroughgoingly that it *is* no longer even its own self. It is in fact one of the most fundamental philosophical tenets of Zen Buddhism that when a thing — anything whatsoever — becomes its own self thoroughgoingly and completely, to the utmost extent of possibility, it ends by breaking through its own limit and going beyond its determinations. At this stage, *A* is no longer *A*; *A* is non-*A*. Or, to use a terminology which is peculiar to Zen, "mountain is not mountain." However, to this statement Zen adds — and this is the most crucial point — that when a thing, by becoming its own self so thoroughgoingly breaks through its limitations and determinations, then paradoxically it is found to be its own Self in the most real and absolute sense.

This process may conveniently be described in terms of the traditional logical language in the following way.[19] One may note that, thus described, the logic of Zen discloses a remarkable originality which would clarify to a great extent the most characteristic form of thinking in Zen. As in the case of the traditional Aristotelian logic, the starting point is furnished by the law of identity, "*A* is *A*," which, as we have seen above, constitutes the logical basis of metaphysical essentialism. The law of identity signifies for Zen Buddhism too that a thing, whatever it be, is identical with itself. To express this empirical truth, Zen says: "Mountain is mountain."

Thus outwardly at least, there is no difference noticeable here between the Aristotelian logical system and Zen logic. Implicitly, however, already at this initial stage Zen takes a view which considerably

[19]Cf. Hideo Masuda: *Bukkyō Shisō-no Gudō-teki Kenkyū* ("Studies in Buddhist Thought as a Search after the Way"), Tokyo, 1966, pp. 219–221. For a more elaborate philosophical treatment of this aspect of Buddhism, cf. Keiji Nishitani: *Shūkyō towa Nani-ka* ("What is Religion?") I, Tokyo, pp. 135-187.

differs from the Aristotelian position. For in the law of identity (*A* is *A*) Zen recognizes a characteristic sign of the self-complacency of normal *bon sens*. From the point of view of Zen, the formula: "*A* is *A*," instead of being a description of a well-grounded observation of the structure of reality, is but a logical presentation of the illusory view of reality seen through the veil of *Māyā*, which is the natural outcome of man's casting upon each of the things of the world a narrow spotlight of the discriminating intellect.

The basic difference, however, between the ordinary type of logic and Zen logic comes out with an undeniable clarity at the next stage. For the former naturally develops the law of identity into the law of non-contradiction (*A* is not non-*A*), while the latter develops it into glaring contradiction, asserting: "*A* is non-*A*." Zen refers to this contradictory stage by the dictum: "Mountain is not mountain." It must be borne in mind, however, that when Zen makes an assertion of this kind, it does not do so in the same epistemological dimension as that of "*A* is *A*." As long as one remains at the level of "*A* is *A*," i.e., the level of empirical experience, one would never be able to say at the same time, "*A* is non-*A*," unless one goes out of one's mind. This fact will become evident beyond any doubt when one encounters a more strange-looking expression like: "The bridge flows on, while the river does not flow."[20] Otherwise expressed, the making of an assertion of this sort presupposes on the part of the person the actualization of a total transformation of consciousness in such a way that he is thereby enabled to witness *A* as it "becomes" out and out *A* itself to such an extent that it breaks through its own *A*-ness, and begins to disclose to him its formless, essenceless, and "aspect"-less aspect.

Thus understood, the formula: "*A* is non-*A*" will have to be more analytically paraphrased as: "*A* is so thoroughgoingly *A* itself that it is no longer *A*." Metaphysically, this is the stage of *chên k'ung* (J.: *shin*

[20] A famous saying of Fu Ta-Shih (J.: Fu Daishi, 497–569), the understanding of which has often been considered by Zen masters as a standard by which to judge the depth of Zen consciousness of the disciples.

kū), the "real Nothingness." Here *A* is not *A* in the positive sense that it is absolutely beyond the determinations and deliminations of *A*-ness, that it is something infinitely more than mere *A*.

The third stage which immediately follows — or rather we should say: which establishes itself at the same time as — the stage of "*A* is non-*A*" is again "*A* is *A*." That is to say, at the final stage, we apparently come back to the initial stage. "Mountain is (again) mountain." Or, as a more popular Zen adage goes: "The flower is red, and the willow is green." In spite of the formal identity, however, the inner structure of "*A* is *A*" is completely different in the two cases. For at the last stage "*A* is *A*" is but an abbreviated expression standing for "*A* is non-*A*; therefore it is *A*." The Diamond Sūtra, to which reference has already been made, describes this situation by saying: "The world is not a world; therefore it deserves to be called *world*," or "A thing — anything whatsoever — is not a thing; therefore it deserves to be called *thing*." This stage is technically known in Mahāyāna Buddhism as *miao yu* (J.: *myō u*), "extraordinary Being." The Chinese word *miao*, meaning literally "subtle," "extraordinary," "miraculously good," is intended to suggest that the world of Being is being seen or experienced here in an unusually elevated dimension, that it is not the world of Being as it is grasped by the discriminating activity of our relative intellect, although outwardly, that is, seen through the eyes of an ordinary man locked up in the limited sphere of empirical experience, it is still the same old world of ours in which "we eat when we feel hungry, drink when we feel thirsty, and lie down when we are sleepy." For it is the common ordinary world which has once lost itself in the abyss of Nothingness and which, then, has taken rise again in its phenomenal form.

What actually happens in the human consciousness between the stage of "*A* is non-*A*" and the next stage, that of "*A* is (again) *A*," crucially determines the nature of Zen Buddhism. The whole thing centers around the total nullification of all individual things in Nothingness and their rebirth from the very bottom of Nothingness again into the domain of empirical reality as concrete individuals, but

completely transformed in their inner structure. And the rise of this kind of consciousness in a concrete individual human mind is what is known in Buddhism as *prajñā,* which might be translated as "transcendental cognition," "non-discriminating cognition" or Supreme Knowledge. We now see that translation, in whatever way it may be made, is, in a case like this, merely a make-shift. For "non-discriminating" is but an aspect of this type of cognition; nor does "transcendental" do justice to its reality, because the latter in its ultimate form is, as we have just seen, a matter of the most concrete and empirical experience which is actualized in the dimension of daily life.

The most important point to note about the rise of the *prajñā* is that it consists in a complete, total transformation being effectuated in the ego-structure of the subject. Formulated as: ["*A* is *A*" → "*A* is non-*A*" → "*A* is *A*"], the whole process might look as if it referred purely to the objective structure of the world. But in truth it concerns, primarily and directly at least, the subjective aspect of the reality. The three logical stages reflect the three basic stages in the process of the birth and establishment of the *prajñā*-type of cognition, although, to be sure, each of these subjective stages does imply a corresponding ontological dimension.

Thus the key-word Nothingness in this context refers first and foremost to the nullification of the selfhood, the ego, conceived and represented as a self-subsistent entity. The core of the ego which has hitherto been distinguishing itself from all others, is now broken down and becomes nullified. But the nullification of the empirical ego as conceived by Zen Buddhism cannot be achieved by a total annihilation of consciousness. The epistemological Nothingness about which Zen talks is not to be confused with the state of sheer unconsciousness.

True, the awareness of *myself* as appears in the above-introduced formula (*I SEE*) *myself* is no longer there. In this sense, and in this sense only, the epistemological Nothingness is a region of unconsciousness. However, in place of the awareness of the empirical ego, there is actualized here the absolute Awareness itself, which we have

expressed above by the formula: *S* → or *SEE*, and which has not been activated in the domain of the empirical ego. Zen often calls it an "ever-lucid Awareness" → *liao liao ch'ang chih*, a phrase attributed to the second Patriarch of Zen Buddhism, Hui K'o (J.: E Ka, 487–593). Strictly speaking, there is in this absolute Awareness no trace even of *I*, so that the formula *S* →, or *I SEE* must, as we have observed earlier, ultimately be reduced to *SEE* alone. Far from being "Nothingness" in the negative acceptation of the term, it is an extremely intense — almost a violent — consciousness, so intense indeed that it goes beyond all verbal descriptions.[21]

In exact correspondence to the total transformation of the subject, there occurs on the side of the "objects" also a drastic change so much so that they cease to subsist as "objects." It is but natural, because where there are no "subjects" confronting "objects," there can be no "object" remaining. All things at this stage lose their essential delimitations. And being no longer obstructed by their own ontological limits, all things flow into one another, reflecting each other and being reflected by each other in the limitlessly vast field of Nothingness.[22] The mountain is here no longer a mountain, the river is no longer a river, for on the corresponding subjective side, "I" am no longer "I."

A somewhat similar case is found in Western philosophy in the minute and vivid description of the experience of "existence" given by Jean-Paul Sartre in his *Nausée,* At that crucial moment when, for the first time Roquintin stands face to face with "existence" in its original nakedness, the chestnut tree loses its chestnut-ness and is therefore no longer a chestnut tree, and the root of the tree loses its

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[21]This point deserves special notice because the word *nirvāṇa* which denotes the same thing as what we here call the subjective Nothingness, has often been misunderstood to mean a total annihilation of consciousness.

[22]The field of Nothingness thus conceived is comparable with the metaphysical *Chaos* of the Taoist Chuang-tzŭ (cf. my paper on Taoism, *Eranos-Jahrbuch* XXXVI, 1967, pp. 389–411). [Editor's note: See volume I, pp. 13–40.]

root-ness — "root-nature" as Buddhism would say — and is no longer a root. The tree now shows itself as an indescribably uncouth and weird mass. It stands now before the terror-stricken eyes of the man as a concrete manifestation of pure "existence" separated from all essential determinations. There is here no longer any ego that sees and recognizes a tree; nor is there any tree to be seen or recognized as such. The whole thing, including both subject and object, is deprived of all delimitations.

In this sense, the whole Being at this stage has turned into a vast, limitless space of Void (i.e., Nothingness) in which nothing may be grasped as something definite. Man directly experiences in such a situation "existence" as something "naked and obscene," as Sartre puts it.

But this very description of Nothingness clearly tells us that the Nothingness which is experienced in this way is by no means "nothing" in the purely negative sense as the word is liable to be understood. On the "subjective" side — if we still want to hold fast to the subject-object distinction — the experiencing of Nothingness does not mean our consciousness becoming completely vacant and empty. Quite the contrary; consciousness here is its own self in its pristine purity, a pure Light or sheer Illumination, being illuminated by itself and illuminating itself. It is the *SEE* of which mention has often been made.

But this Illumination, through illuminating itself, illumines at the same time the entire world of Being. This means that on the "objective" side too, things are not simply reduced to "nothing" in the negative sense of the term. True, at this stage none of the individual existents exists self-subsistently. But this is not the same as saying that they are simple nil. On the contrary, they are there as concrete individuals, while being at the same time so many actualizations of the limitless, "aspect"-less aspect of an ever-active, ever-creative Act. But this Act, for the Zen consciousness, is no other than the Illumination of the *SEE* itself which we have just established as the "subjective" side of the experience of Nothingness.

Instead of describing the *SEE* as Light or Illumination, Zen often refers to this simple Verb *SEE* by the term *hsin*, the Mind. And it often speaks of all things being the products of the Mind. It will have been understood by now that this and other similar assertions are not made on the basis of an idealist view which would reduce everything to "thought" or "ideas." For the Mind as understood by Zen is not the minds of individual persons. What is meant by the word Mind is the Reality before it is broken up into the so-called "mind" and "thing"; it is a state prior to the basic dichotomy of "subject" and "object." Curiously enough, be it remarked, the word *hsin* ("mind") in this context is exactly synonymous with the word *wu-hsin* ("no-mind") which we encountered in an earlier context. The Mind understood in this sense is often called also *hsin fa* (J.: *shin bō*), the Mind-Reality.

As will be explained fully later, the "mind" as understood in the ordinary sense is, in the view of Zen, but an abstraction, that is, the "subjective" aspect of the Mind-Reality grasped as an independent factor and posited as an individual, self-subsistent psychological principle. When, therefore, Zen asserts that "all things are but one mind," it does not mean that the mind as ordinarily understood produces or creates all things out of itself. No. It simply wants to indicate how out of the Mind-Reality there emerges what we ordinarily recognize as subject and object. The "mind" as understood in the ordinary sense is in this view only an element indistinguishably fused with its "objective" counterpart into the unity of the Mind-Reality as a totality.

It often happened, however, in the course of the history of Buddhism that the Mind-Reality was confused with the "mind." See for instance the famous anecdote concerning the great Zen master Fa Yen Wen I (J.: Hōgen Bun-eki, 885–958), the founder of the Fa Yen school, a remarkably philosophical mind, who had been famous before his experience of enlightenment for upholding the idealist position generally known as the "Mind-Only"-Theory. The theory, put in a nutshell, holds that the whole world of Being is nothing but a grand manifestation of one single "mind," and that all that exist are

nothing but so many products of one single act of "cognition."[23]

Once Fa Yen was traveling with two companions in search of the Truth, when they happened to take shelter from rain in a hermitage belonging to a great Zen master of the age, Ti Tsang Kuei Ch'ên (J.: Jizō Keijin, 867–928). They did not know, however, who he was.

Against the background of the drizzling rain, the three young men discussed with enthusiasm, self-conceit and self-satisfaction, the problems raised by the famous dictum of the monk Chao: "The heaven and earth (i.e., the whole universe) is of one and the same root as my own self, and all things are one with me,"[24] while Ti Tsang listened to them silently. Then suddenly he asked, "Are the mountains, rivers, and the earth one and the same thing as the self, or different?" "One and the same," Fa Yen replied. Thereupon, the aged Zen master, without saying anything, put up two fingers, gazed intently at them, then retired to his own room.

As the rain stopped, the three young men were about to leave, when all of a sudden the master Ti Tsang, pointing at a stone in the courtyard said to Fa Yen, "I understand that you hold the doctrine of the whole world being one single mind. Is, then, this stone inside the mind or outside?" "Of course it is in the mind," replied Fa Yen. Thereupon Ti Tsang remarked, "What a cumbersome burden you have in your mind! Due to what kind of network of causes do you have to carry about in the mind such a heavy stone?"

Fa Yen who did not know what to say, decided to stay there to put himself under the spiritual guidance of Ti Tsang. There Fa Yen learnt that all the philosophical ideas and theories that he had studied were absolutely of no avail if he wanted to obtain the final ultimate answer to the most ultimate existential question. A month or so had passed when, one day, having been driven by Ti Tsang into a logical *impasse*

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[23]Chinese: *San chieh wei hsin, wan fa wei shih*, lit. "the three regions (of the world of Becoming) are but one single mind, and the ten thousand existents are but one single cognition."

[24]Quoted above, cf. note 11.

and having finally confessed, "O Master, I am now in a situation in which language is reduced to silence and thinking has no way to follow!" He heard his master remark, "If you still are to talk about the ultimate Reality, see how it is nakedly apparent in everything and every event!" Fa Yen is thereupon said to have attained enlightenment.

This final remark of Ti Tsang discloses the Zen understanding of the thesis that "the entire world of Being is but one single mind." The thesis in this understanding means first and foremost that the self — which at this stage will more properly be written Self — directly and immediately sees its own self reflected on all things as "two mirrors facing each other without there being between them even a shadow of a thing."

Thus for a Zen master like Ti Tsang, the dictum: "all things are but one mind" simply refers to a peculiar state of awareness in which the so-called "object," a mountain for instance, and the so-called "subject," i.e., a man, stand face to face with each other like two mirrors reflecting one another, there being absolutely nothing between the two. Since both are like lucid mirrors facing each other, one never can tell which is active and which is passive. In fact each of the two is both active and passive, reflecting and being reflected. There is no distinction to be made here between the "subject" and the "object" — "the man sees the mountain, the mountain sees the man," as the above-mentioned Zen saying puts it. Note that there is no place even for the word "and" between "the man sees the mountain" and "the mountain sees the man." The man, i.e., the "mind," immediately sees its own reality in its absolute objectivity being reflected — or more strictly we should say: being actualized — in the mountain. But by this very act of the mind, the mountain, on its part, recognizes its own reality as it is actualized in the mind. And throughout the entire process, not a single thing, neither the mind nor the mountain, is objectified. For the whole thing, including the mind and the mountain, the "subject" and the "object," is a single act of *SEE,* one single act of the Mind-Reality. This, however, is not to assert that the act of

SEE is pure "subjectivity" because where there is absolutely no objectification of anything, there can be no subjectification of anything either.

But such a situation is not certainly anything which one could expect to actualize in the dimension of ordinary empirical experience. It actualizes, if at all, only in an extraordinary — so it appears to normal *bon sens* — dimension of consciousness. Thus Fa Yen himself later developed his own idea about this point in his celebrated poem entitled "The Whole World is One Single Mind" as follows:

> The whole world is but one single Mind. And all that exist are but one single Cognition. Since there is nothing but Cognition, and since all are but one Mind, the eye is able to recognize sounds and the ear colors. If colors do not enter into the ear, how could sounds touch the eye?

And yet the field of the Mind is so limitlessly vast and infinitely flexible that it may, and does, happen that the eye responds specifically to colors, and the ear to sounds. Then it is that the empirical world takes its rise out of the depths of the Mind. He goes on to say:

> But when the eye is adjusted to colors, and when the ear responds to sounds, all existent things are discriminated and recognized. If all things were not thus distinguishable from one another, how could one see their dream-like existences? But of all these mountains, rivers and the great earth, what is there to change? What is there not to change?

It is of utmost importance to note that the two different dimensions, i.e., that of the empirical world and that of Nothingness are actualized at one and the same time in this single act of *SEE*. It is not the case that one witnesses this at one time and experiences that at another. Rather, one sees the Apparent in the Real, and the Real in the Apparent, there being no discrepancy between them. This is why many of the famous Zen sayings, poems and paintings look as if they were simply objective descriptions of Nature. Thus the Zen master Chia Shan Shan Hui (J.: Kassan Zenne, 805–881) — "Shan Hui of the mountain Chia" —, when asked "How is the landscape of the mountain Chia (Chia Shan)?", replied:

Monkeys have already gone home behind the blue peaks
Embracing their young to their breasts.
A bird has alighted before the deep-green rocks,
Carrying a flower-petal in its beak.

Our Fa Yen is related to have remarked once on this poem: "For thirty years I have mistakenly regarded this as a description of the external landscape!"

Does this remark of Fa Yen mean that the poem in truth is to be taken as a symbolic presentation of an inner landscape? Definitely not. He is trying to say something entirely different. In fact, the things of Nature like the monkeys, bird, blue peaks, green rock, flower-petal etc., are not symbols intended to point to something beyond. They *are* so many concretely real things. And the poem in this sense is a concrete description of external Nature. The important thing here to remark is that the natural landscape is seen with the eyes of the *SEE*. All the events that are described — the monkeys going home and the bird alighting, holding a flower in its beak — are regarded as the Eternal-Present evolving itself on the empirical axis of time and space. "What is there to change? What is there not to change?"

The relation between the Eternal-Present and the Time-Space dimension of existence in Zen consciousness is a very subtle and mobile one. It is mobile in the sense that the delicate equilibrium kept on the mutual interaction of the two dimensions one upon the other is ready to tilt at any moment into either direction. Thus it is now the Eternal-Present that is more prominently in view; the very next moment the Time-Space axis may protrude itself and hide the Eternal-Present behind it. In order to make this particular situation understandable, Zen sometimes has recourse to expressions that may be regarded as approaching symbolism. Then, instead of just throwing out upon the canvas of language bits of external Nature — as was the case with the description of the mountain landscape by Chia Shan — Zen describes certain things of Nature which are put into particular relations, with one another, in such a way that the

description of Nature itself might graphically reproduce the aforementioned subtle and mobile relation between the two dimensions of the Reality. The following verses are but one example out of an innumerable number of similar cases.

> The shadows of the bamboos are sweeping the staircase,
> But there is no stirring of even a mote of dust.
> The moonlight is piercing to the bottom of the deep river,
> But there is not even a scar left in the waters.

The shadows of the bamboos are actually sweeping the staircase. That is, there is motion and commotion in the empirical dimension of the world. But no dust is stirred up by this phenomenal movement. That is, the supra-phenomenal dimension of Reality is eternally calm and quiet. It must be remarked that the commotion of the Apparent and the non-commotion of the Real are not actually separable one from the other. They actualize themselves simultaneously. That is to say, the non-commotion of the absolute dimension of Reality is actualized precisely through the commotion of the phenomenal dimension of the same Reality. The phenomenal commotion and the absolute tranquility are but two aspects of one single Reality. The act of *SEE* is of such a nature.

This delicate relation between the Apparent and the Real, Multiplicity and Unity in the act of *SEE* comes out still more clearly in some Zen Sayings which have specifically been devised to visualize it. The Zen master Yung An Shan Ching (J.: Ei-an Zenjō), for example, when asked, "What is the one single color?" replied, "Easy to recognize are the white particles in the snow; difficult to distinguish are the black (molecules) of soot in the ink."[25] By this he wanted to indicate that the snow which from afar looks as one single mass of white color is found to contain, if examined closely, an infinite number of white particles each one of which is an individual,

[25]The distinction between the two phrases "easy to recognize" and "difficult to distinguish" is purely rhetorical, a phenomenon which is very common in Chinese prose and poetry.

self-sufficient entity. In the same manner, in a cake of Chinese ink which appears to be a solid piece of black material, there are an infinity of individual molecules of soot.

Likewise Shao Shan Huan P'u (J.: Shōzan Kanfu), when asked, "What is the aspect of the absolute Unity?" replied, "A snowy heron flies away into the white sky; the mountain is far away and deep blue is its color."[26]

More celebrated is the saying of Tung Shan Lian Chieh (J.: Tōzan Ryōkai, 807–869), the founder of the Ts'ao Tung (J.: Sōtō) sect: "Filling a silver bowl with snow, and a white heron standing drenched in moonlight."[27]

The picture of a white thing, or an infinite number of white things, in the very midst of a broad white field, visualizes the subtle and mobile relation between the sensible and the supra-sensible. Metaphysically it refers to the *coincidentia oppositorum* that subsists between Multiplicity and Unity — Multiplicity being in itself Unity, and Unity in itself Multiplicity. And this is exactly what is meant by the world-famous sentence found at the beginning of the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra* (J.: *Hannya Shingyō*) which reads: *Rūpaṃ śūnyatā, śūnyataiva rūpam. Rūpān na pṛthak śūnyatā, śūnyatāyā na pṛthag rūpam,* meaning literally: "The sensible is Nothingness, Nothingness is the sensible. The sensible is no other than Nothingness; Nothingness is no other than the sensible."

The word "Nothing" in this passage refers to the same thing as what is meant by the word *Mind* or *SEE* about which we have been talking. Since the reality itself which is at issue is of a contradictory — so it seems from the viewpoint of our common sense — nature, we are forced, in trying to describe it, to have recourse to a contradictory use of words, saying, for instance, that the Mind is sensible

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[26]That is to say: there *is* the mountain, but it is so deeply blue that it is hardly distinguishable from the blue sky.

[27]For other examples of the same nature cf. Eizō Itō, *Zen Shisō Shi Taikei* ("A System of the History of Zen Thought"), Tokyo, 1963, pp. 194–200.

and not sensible, transcendental and not transcendental at one and the same time.

The Mind-Reality can by no means be said to be purely sensible; it *is* transcendental in the sense that it transcends the limits of the empirical ego. For the Mind in the sense of *SEE* is the self-actualizing activity of a Cosmic Ego. But, again, it cannot be said to be purely transcendental, because the activity of this Cosmic Ego is actualized only through the consciousness of a concrete individual person. We must go further and say that the activity of the concrete individual "mind" is itself the *actus* of the transcendental Mind. There is thus, properly speaking absolutely no distance between the sensible and the transcendental. And yet there is a certain respect in which they *are* distinguishable from one another; that is, the individual "mind" is most concretely individual, while the Cosmic Mind is really — i.e., not metaphorically — absolute and transcendental. And the Mind-Reality in its real sense is a contradictory unity of these two aspects.

This peculiar structure of the Mind-Reality is indicated by Lin Chi in the following way:

> What do you think is Reality? Reality is nothing other than the Mind-Reality. The Mind-Reality has no definite form. It permeates and runs through the whole universe. It is, at this very moment, in this very place, so vividly present. But the minds of the ordinary people are not mature enough to see this. Thus they establish everywhere names and concepts, (like the "Absolute," the "Holy," "enlightenment," etc.) and vainly search after Reality in these names and letters.[28]

The sentence: "It is, at this very moment, in this very place, so vividly present," refers to the individual and sensible aspect of the Mind-Reality. The Mind-Reality, cosmic and all-pervading as it is, necessarily and invariably actualizes itself in the individual minds of individual persons. This point is made clear by the following words of Lin Chi:

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[28] *Lin Chi Lu*, 33, p. 55.

O Brethren, the Mind-Reality has no definite form. It permeates and runs through the whole universe. In the eye it acts as sight; in the ear it acts as hearing; in the nose it acts as the sense of smell; in the mouth it speaks; in the hand it grasps; in the foot it walks. All these activities are originally nothing but one single Spiritual Illumination, which diversifies itself into harmonious correspondences.[29] It is because the Mind has in this way no definite form of its own that it can so freely act in every form.[30]

The contradictory unity of the most concretely individual-present and the most transcendentally absolute-eternal in the *actus* of the Mind or *SEE* is given by Lin Chi a very original description in the following passage:

O venerable Friends, (instead of being caught in the net of phenomenal things), you should grasp directly the Man who is pulling the wires of these shadowy phenomena behind the scenes. If you but realize that the Man[31] *is* the ultimate Source of all Buddhas, (you will immediately see that) any place in which you actually are at the present moment *is* the ultimate and absolute place for you, o Brethren!

(You are now listening to my discourse.) It is not your material bodies that understand the discourse. Do your spleen, stomach, and liver understand the discourse? No! Does the empty space understand the discourse? No! What, then, is the one that is actually understanding my discourse? It is no other than you yourself who are thus undeniably standing before me. I mean by "you" that fellow who, without having any definite visible form, is luminous by himself, illuminating himself. It is this very fellow who is actually listening to this discourse of mine and understands it. If you but realize this point, you are on the spot the same

[29]"Six harmonious correspondences" are (1) sight which is constituted by the correspondence between the eye and visible things, (2) hearing based on the correspondence between the ear and sounds, (3) smell based on the correspondence between the nose and odors, (4) taste based on the correspondence between the tongue and flavors, (5) touch based on the correspondence between the tactile sense and touchable objects, and (6) "cognition" based on the correspondence between the intellect and concepts-images.

[30]*Op. cit.*, 31, p. 48.

[31]As we shall see later, the "Man" in the thought of Lin Chi is no other than the Mind-Reality conceived in a very peculiar way.

> as our spiritual ancestor Buddha. Then, everything you do, in all time without interruption, will be in perfect conformity with Reality.[32]

The inner structure of the Mind is thus extremely elusive, at least to the discriminating intellect. And the word "mind" as used in Zen texts is consequently very delusive. There is in any case always noticeable in the actual usage of the word a subtle interplay of the sensible and the supra-sensible orders of things. As a telling example of this point we shall mention a celebrated anecdote concerning the debut of the sixth Patriarch Hui Nêng (J.: Enō) into the world of Zen Buddhism in southern China.

At that time Hui Nêng was still concealing his identity for some political reasons — so we are told. One day he sat in a corner of a temple in Kuang Chou listening to a lecture being given on a Buddhist Sutra. All of a sudden the wind rose, and the flag at the gate of the temple began to flutter. This immediately induced some of the monks in the audience into a hot debate. It started by one of them remarking, "See how the flag is fluttering!" "No," another objected, "it is not the flag that is moving. It is the wind that is moving!" An endless discussion ensued as to what was *really* moving, the flag or the wind. At last Hui Nêng could not restrain himself any longer. He said, "It is not that the wind moves. Nor is it the case that the flag moves. It is, o virtuous Brethren, your minds that are fluttering!"

This remark of Hui Nêng about the "fluttering" of the "mind" is, as it stands, a bit misleading. For it is liable to lead one into thinking that he meant the individual mind or the individual consciousness of a concrete person. Furthermore, this interpretation seems in fact to suit very well the situation. It does give a certain amount of insight into an important aspect of the Zen world-view. One may just find this kind of explanation interesting or curious, and being satisfied, may not go any further. And that will be fatal to the real understanding of the Zen world-view.

However, the truly delicate point about this is that such an

[32] *Op. cit.* 30, p. 45.

interpretation of the situation here in question is not entirely wrong either. For it *is* partially true, though not totally. In order to obtain a total understanding of the matter, we have to begin by taking the word "mind" as it was used by Hui Nêng in the sense of the Mind or *SEE* having reference to both the empirical and transcendental dimensions of the Zen awareness. It is the Mind taken in this sense that moves.

This last statement implies first of all that in the empirical dimension, the mind of the individual person is set in motion. And the movement or "fluttering" of the concrete and individual mind on the empirical level of experience becomes actualized in the fluttering motion of the flag in the wind. Here again, be it remarked, there is properly speaking absolutely no room for the word *and* to be inserted between the three factors of the movement. The utmost we can say by way of description is this: By the very movement of the mind, the flag-wind is set in motion. The movement of these three things is in fact one single movement.

This, however, is still but a partial description of the Reality. For, according to the typical Zen understanding which we have explained earlier, there can be no fluttering of the individual "mind" unless there be at the same time the fluttering of the Mind. A simultaneous fluttering motion occurs in the two dimensions, sensible and supra-sensible. And since there is no connecting *and* between these two dimensions except in rational analysis, the fluttering of the Mind in reality is the fluttering of the individual consciousness. And the fluttering of the Mind of this nature is actualized in the phenomenal world as a total phenomenon of "a man being conscious of a flag fluttering in the wind."

As the flag flutters, the whole universe flutters. And this fluttering is an *actus* of the Mind. But here again we find ourselves faced with a paradoxical situation — "paradoxical" from the viewpoint of common sense. For the "whole universe" in this understanding is nothing other than the Mind. Since the Mind is in this manner an absolute whole for which there is no distinction of the "inside" and the

"outside," and beyond which or apart from which there can be nothing "else" conceivable, the fluttering of the Mind is no fluttering at all. There is in reality absolutely no movement here. As we have observed before, the Eternal-Present is eternally calm and tranquil in spite of all the motions of the Mind on another dimension.

This "paradoxical" structure of Reality is beautifully and concisely pictured in the famous saying of P'ang Yun (J.: Hō-on):[33]

> Lovely snow flakes! They are falling on no other place.

It is snowing hard. It is snowing in big beautiful white flakes. Each one of these flakes, considered individually and as part of the external Nature, is certainly falling from the sky to the earth. However, at a metaphysico-epistemological stage at which both the snow and the ego-spectator are fused into the original unity of the Mind so that the whole universe has turned into the snow, the snow flakes have no place upon which to fall. As an external landscape, the snow flakes are falling. But as an inner landscape of the Mind, there is no falling, no movement, for the whole universe cannot fall toward any other place. Motion can take place only in a "relative" world. It is meaningless to speak of the motion of a thing in a dimension where there is conceivable no "outside" system of reference which the thing may be referred to. If, even then, we are to use the "image" of falling, we would probably have to say that the snow flakes, i.e., the Mind, are falling toward their own place, i.e., the Mind. But evidently such a falling is no falling at all.

Exactly the same idea is expressed by Huang Lung Hui Nan (J.: Ōryū Enan, 1002–1069)[34] through a similar imagery as follows:

> "The drizzling spring rain! It has kept falling from last evening, through the whole night until dawn. Drop after drop, it falls. But it is falling on

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[33]P'ang Yun (the eighth century) was one of the foremost and most distinguished of all the lay disciples of Zen. The anecdote containing this saying is found in the above-mentioned *Pi Yen Lu*, (J.: *Hekigan Roku*) No. 42.

[34]Huang Lung was a great Zen Master in the school of Lin Chi, and the founder of a sub-sect known after his name as the Huang Lung school.

no other place. Tell me, if you can! To what place does it fall?' Then, without waiting for an answer, he himself replied: 'It drops upon your eyes! It is penetrating into your nose!"

It is highly significant that Huang Lung combines here two contradictory statements. On the one hand, he says, the rain is falling on no other place, and, on the other, he states that it is falling upon the nose and eyes.

The rain does not fall anywhere, to begin with, because in the cosmic landscape of the Mind, the whole universe is nothing other than Rain. If the *whole* universe is Rain, it will be but natural that the latter should find no "other" place upon which to fall. The entire universe which is no other than the Mind (i.e., *SEE*), is Raining. And since the universe in its entirety is Raining, the Rain, if it falls at all anywhere, cannot but fall to its own self. That is to say, Raining in this particular situation is the same as non-Raining. Yet, on the other hand, it is also true that the rain is actually falling upon the bodily eyes and penetrating into the bodily nose of an individual person. Otherwise there would not be the awareness of the "falling and not-falling" of the Rain in the cosmic dimension of the Mind. The bodily eyes and nose of an individual concrete person are the only *loci* where the Mind-Rain can actualize itself here and now.

What precedes is to be considered a lengthy paraphrase of the Zen interpretation of the "Mind-Only"-Theory as represented by the extremely terse dictum: *I chieh hsin* (J.: *issai shin*), "all things are Mind." It is understood by now that this dictum does not mean that the whole universe comes into, or is contained in, the "mind." It simply means that the whole universe *is* in itself and by itself the Mind. A monk once asked the famous Zen master Ch'ang Sha Ching Ch'ên (J.: Chōsha Keishin, the ninth century): "How is it possible to reduce the mountains, rivers, and the great earth (i.e., the whole universe) to one's own self?" The master answered: "How is it possible to reduce the mountains, rivers and the great earth to one's own self?" The question and the answer are exactly identical with each other, word for word. But they arise from two entirely different dimensions of

awareness. The monk who asks the question understands the "all things are Mind" at the empirical level, however philosophically elaborated it may be, wondering how it is at all possible for the whole universe to be reduced to one single mind. Note that the word "mind" itself is taken in the sense of the empirical ego. Ch'ang Sha's answer is a rhetorical question. He means to say: It is absolutely impossible to reduce the whole universe to one single mind, because the whole universe *is* from the beginning the Mind, there being no discrepancy between them. There is, in this understanding, no opposition between the mountains, rivers and the great earth as "external" Nature and the mind as the "internal" domain. There is no "mind" to assimilate the external Nature into its own "inner" unity.

VI

The Field Structure of Ultimate Reality

We are now in a position to analyze more theoretically the basic structure of Zen epistemology. For that purpose we would propose to introduce the concept of "Field" into our exposition. In fact, what we have been discussing in the foregoing under the key-term "Mind" may philosophically be represented as a peculiar kind of dynamic Field, from which one could obtain *through abstraction* the perceiving "subject" and, again *through abstraction*, the object perceived. The "Field" thus understood will refer to the original, unbroken unity of the whole, functioning as the epistemological *prius* of our experience of the phenomenal world.

We must remember in this connection that the philosophical thinking of Zen — and of Buddhism in general — is based on, and centers around, the category of *relatio* instead of *substantia*. Everything, the whole world of Being, is looked at from a relational point of view. Nothing is to be regarded as self-subsistent and self-sufficient. The "subject" is "subject" because it is relative to "object." The "object" is "object" because it is relative to "subject." In this system

there is no such thing as *Ding an sich*. The *an sich* is most emphatically denied. For a *Ding* can be established as a *Ding* only when it is permeated by the light of the "subject." Likewise there is no "mind" or "subject" which has no reference to the sphere of *Dinge*. And since the "subject" which is thus essentially relative to the "object," is, as we have seen earlier, both the individual "mind" and the universal Mind, the whole thing, i.e., the Field itself, must necessarily be also of a relational nature. It is in fact a Relation itself between the sensible and the supra-sensible.

Viewed in the light of this consideration, what we ordinarily call and regard as "mind" (or "subject," "consciousness," etc.) is nothing more than an abstraction. It is a concept or image which is obtained when we articulate, whether consciously or unconsciously, the originally inarticulate Field into an active and a passive sphere, and establish the former as an independently subsistent entity. Likewise the "object" or "thing" is an abstraction taken out of the whole inarticulate Field by a kind of abstractive inflection of the latter towards the "passive" sphere.

Zen, however, does not want to remain content with this observation. It goes further and insists that we should attain to a stage at which we could witness the originally inarticulate Field articulating itself freely, of its own accord, and not through the dichotomizing activity of our intellect, into either the "subject" or the "object." It is important to note that in this self-articulation of the Field, the whole Field is involved, not this or that particular sphere of it. Instead of being an abstraction, the "subject" or the "object" in such a case is a total concretization or actualization of the entire Field. Thus — to go back to the particular system of formulation which we used in the earlier part of this paper — if the total Field in its original state of inarticulation is to be represented by the formula: *SEE*, the same total Field in its articulate state may be formulated as: *I SEE THIS* (all words being in capital letters). This last formula must remain the same, whether the whole Field actualizes itself as the Subject or as the Object. Thus in this particular context, the Subject or *I* means *I*

(=*I SEE THIS*). Likewise, the Object or *THIS* means (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*.

At this stage, when I say, for example, "I," I do not thereby mean my empirical ego. What is meant is rather the "I" as a concrete actualization of the entire Field. The "I" at this stage *is* actually "I," but it is an infinitely dynamic and mobile kind of "I" in the sense that it is an "I" that can at any moment be freely turned into "THIS" and reveal itself in the latter form. In the same way, "THIS" is not fixedly "THIS." It is a "THIS" that is ready at any moment to be assimilated into "I" and begin to function as an aspect of, or in the form of, "I." All this is possible simply because each of "I" and "THIS" is in itself a total actualization of the same entire Field.

This dynamic relation between the Subject and Object is admirably described in the following anecdote which in the course of history has come to count among the most important of all Zen *kōans*. The story brings onto the stage two prominent figures in the Golden Age of Zen Buddhism. One is Ma Tsu Tao I (J.: Baso Dō-itsu, 709–788) and Pai Chang Huai Hai (J.: Hyakujō Ekai, 720–814). Pai Chang, who is destined to become later one of the greatest Zen masters, is in this story still a young disciple of Ma Tsu. The anecdote as it is recorded in the *Pi Yen Lu*[35] reads:

> Listen! Once, Ma Tsu was on his way to some place, accompanied by Pai Chang, when all of a sudden they saw a wild duck flying away above their heads. Ma asked, "What is it?" Pai answered, "A wild duck." Ma, "Where is it flying to?" Pai, "It has already flown away!" Thereupon the Master grabbed the nose of Pai Chang and twisted it violently. Pai cried out in pain, "Ouch!" The Master remarked on the spot, "How can you say that the wild duck has flown away?"

The young Pai Chang is here looking up at the wild duck as it flies away. The wild duck exists as an object independently of Pai Chang

[35] *Op. cit.*, No. LIII.

who is looking at it. In his eyes, it is as though the bird were subsistent by itself, and it is as though the self-subsistent bird flew away and disappeared beyond the horizon. It is only when he has his nose grabbed and twisted that it dawns upon his mind like a flash that the wild duck is not an "object" existing independently of the activity of his mind, and that the bird is still there with him, or rather, as his own self. The entire Field comprising both himself and the bird, becomes alive and reveals itself nakedly to his eyes. Pai Chang is said to have attained enlightenment on that occasion.

The anecdote presents an interesting example of the emphasis turning from the "objective" aspect of the Field (represented by the wild duck) towards its "subjective" aspect (represented by Pai Chang himself) in such a way that, as a result, the dynamics of the Field in its entirety is realized on the spot.

In the next anecdote, which is as a Zen *kōan* probably even more famous than the preceding one, the turning of the emphasis takes exactly the reversed course, that is, from the "subjective" sphere towards the "objective." Otherwise expressed, we witness here the whole Field of *I SEE THIS* becoming reduced to the single point of *THIS*, and standing as such before our own eyes. The *kōan* is known as the cypress-tree-in-the-courtyard of Chao Chou (J.: Jō Shū),[36] and is recorded in the famous *kōan*-collection *Wu Men Kuan* (J.: *Mumon Kan*).[37] It reads:

> Listen! Once a monk asked Chao Chou, "Tell me, what is the significance of the First Patriarch's coming from the West?" Chao Chou replied, "The cypress tree in the courtyard!"

The monk asked about the significance of the historical event of Bodhidharma coming all the way from India to China. His intention apparently was to grasp from the inside the significance of this event so that he might participate existentially in the living world of Zen.

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[36]Chao Chou Tsung Shên (J.: Jōshū Jūshin).
[37]No. XXXVII.

The answer given by Chao Chou took a very abrupt and unexpected turn to disconcert the monk: "The cypress tree in the courtyard!"

The inner mechanism of this statement is just the same as that shown in the anecdote of the wild duck and Pai Chang. Only the energy of the Field is this time inflected towards the opposite direction. Chao Chou abruptly puts under the monk's nose the whole Field of Reality in the most vividly real and concrete form of a cypress tree. In other terms, instead of presenting the Field as *I* (= *I SEE THIS*) — as Ma Tsu did with Pai Chang — Chao Chou presents it as (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*. This indicates that the "cypress tree" as presented by Chao Chou is not *simply* or *only* a cypress tree. For it carries here the whole weight of the Field. The cypress tree, a real and concrete cypress tree as it is, stands before our eyes as something growing out of the very depths of Nothingness — the Eternal-Present being actualized at this present moment in this particular place in the dimension of the temporal and phenomenal. In a single cypress tree in the courtyard there is concentrated the whole energy of the Field of Reality.

As Niu T'ou Fa Jung (J.: Gozu Hōyū, 594–657) remarks:[38]

> "A mote of dust flies, and the entire sky is clouded. A particle of rubbish falls, and the whole earth is covered."

And Hung Chih Chêng Chüeh (J.: Wanshi Shōgaku, 1091–1157):[39]

> "The Reality (i.e., the Field) has no definite aspect of its own; it reveals itself in accordance with things. The Wisdom (i.e., *I SEE*) has no definite knowledge of its own; it illumines in response to situations. Look! The green bamboo is so serenely green; the yellow flower is so profusely

[38]Niu T'ou, a famous Zen master in the T'ang dynasty. He was first a Confucianist, and later turned to Buddhism. He became the founder of an independent school in Zen Buddhism.

[39]An outstanding figure in the Ts'ao Tung (J.: Sōtō) school, famous for the strong emphasis he laid on the importance of "silent-illumination" (*mo chao*, J.: *moku shō*) as the best method for attaining enlightenment.

yellow! Just pick up anything you like, and see! In every single thing *IT* is so nakedly manifested."

In the philosophical view of Zen a "concrete" or "real" thing in the true sense of the term is of such a nature. What we usually regard as a concrete thing — the "primary substance" of Aristotle — is, from the point of view of Zen, nothing but an abstract entity, not "reality." A really concrete individual must be, for Zen, an individual-concrete which is permeated and penetrated by the absolute-universal, or rather which *is* the absolute-universal. A cypress tree is an individual particular; it is *THIS*. But through being *THIS*, it cannot but be a concretization of *I SEE THIS*. It is, in other words, a concretization of the whole universe. The cypress tree is here the focus-point of the Field of Reality. We now understand what is really meant by Lin Chi when, as we have earlier observed, he states that "the Mind-Reality permeates and runs through the whole universe," but that it is actualized in "the concrete person who is actually listening to his discourse." Lin Chi presents the whole thing in the form of Man, the "subject" in the sense of the master of the whole Field of Reality, the absolute Selfhood. Chao Chou presents it in the form of the Cypress Tree, the "object" in the sense of the absolute center of the selfsame Field. From whichever direction one may approach, one invariably ends by encountering the Field itself.

What is most important to remark about this problem is that seeing the cypress tree in the courtyard as an actualization or concretization of the Field does not mean seeing "something," say, the transcendental Absolute, beyond the concrete thing. Following *Hua Yen* (J.: *Kegon*) philosophy which reached its perfection in China, Zen emphatically denies Something Metaphysical lying at the back of the Phenomenal.

Quite the contrary, Zen "absolutizes" — if we are allowed to coin such a verb — the Phenomenal itself. The cypress tree in its concrete reality *is* the Absolute at this very moment in this very place. It is not even a "self-manifestation" of the Absolute. For the Absolute has no space "other" than itself for manifesting itself. And such is the

structure of the "objective" aspect of the Field.

VII

The Zen Image of Man

The foregoing chapter will have made it clear that the Reality as Zen conceives it may best be represented as a Field saturated with energy, a particular state of tension constituted by two major sources of force, the Subject and the Object, the word Subject being understood in the sense of *I* (= *I SEE THIS*), i.e., as an actualization of the whole Field, and the word Object in the sense of (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*, i.e., again as an actualization of the same Field. We have also observed how the balance of forces is delicately maintained. The Field itself never loses itself, toward whichever of its two spheres its inner energy be inflected. But the actual — i.e., conscious — point at which the balance is maintained is found to be constantly moving through the entire Field, from the point of pure subjectivity to the point of pure objectivity. Four major forms are clearly distinguishable.

1. Sometimes it is as though the Field maintains perfect stability, without there being any particular salient point in the entire Field as the center of the stability. Then the whole Field maintains itself in a state of extreme tension, a state of absolute and universal Illumination, an Awareness where there is nothing whatsoever for man to be aware of. There is in this state neither the "subject" nor the "object." Both *I* and *THIS* disappear from the surface of the Field. This is a state about which Zen often says: "There is in the original state of Reality absolutely nothing whatsoever." It is also often referred to as *Oriental Nothingness* in the philosophies of the East.

2. But, sometimes, out of this eternal Stillness, there suddenly arises the glaring consciousness of the Subject. The energy that has been saturating evenly the entire Field is now aroused from the state of quietude, gushes forth toward the "subjective" sphere of the Field, and ends by being crystallized into the Subject. Then, the Field in its

entirety is actualized in the luminous point of *I*. Nothing else is visible. The whole world is nothing other than *I*. In such a state, the Zen master would say: "I alone sit on top of the highest mountain," I alone; nothing else, nobody else. The important point here, however, is that the "I" is not an empirical ego. The "I" is a subjective concretization of the entire Field. Thus the dictum: "I alone sit on top of the highest mountain" implies that the whole universe is sitting on top of the mountain with the man, or in the form of an individual man.

3. Sometimes, again, the energy aroused from its stability flows toward the "objective" sphere of the Field. Then it is the Object that is alone visible — the stately Cypress Tree towering up in the midst of the limitless Void — although the same amount of energy that could at any moment be crystallized into the Subject is also being mobilized in the appearance of the Object.

4. Finally the Field may go back again to its original state of Stillness, with the difference that this time both the Subject and the Object are given their proper places in the Field. Superficially we are now back to our old familiar world of empirical experience, where "the flower is naturally red and the willow is naturally green." With regard to its inner structure, however, this old familiar world of ours is infinitely different from the same world as seen through the eyes of the purely empirical ego. For our old familiar world, this time, reveals itself in its pristine purity and innocence. The empirical world which has once lost itself into the abyss of Nothingness, now returns to life again in an unusual freshness. "Here we realize," Dōgen[40] observes, "that the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth in their original purity and serenity should never be confused with the mountains, rivers, and the great earth (as seen through the eyes of the ordinary people)." The same idea is expressed in a more poetic way as:

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[40]Cf. above, note 4. The quotation is from his *Shōbōgenzō*, Book XXV, *Keiseisanshoku* ("The Voice of the Valley and the Color of the Mountain").

Though the wind has fallen off, flower-petals are falling still,
As a bird sings, the mountain deepens its silence and stillness.

"The wind has fallen off," that is, the entire world of Being has fallen into the eternal quietude of Nothingness; and yet "flower petals are falling still," that is, all things are still vividly and concretely maintaining themselves in their original empirical commotion. "As a bird sings," that is, precisely because of this colorful presence of things in the empirical dimension, "the mountain deepens its silence and stillness," that is, Nothingness makes itself felt in its unfathomable depth.

Someone asked the great Zen master of the Lin Chi school in the Sung dynasty, Hsü T'ang Chi Yü (J.: Kidō Chigu, 1185–1269), "Tell me, what is the significance of the First Patriarch's coming from the West?"[41] He answered:

Deep is the mountain, no guest is coming.
All day long I hear the monkeys chattering.

The dynamic structure of the Field which is thus constituted by the very peculiar tension between the *I* (= *I SEE THIS*) and the (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*, and which, is actualizable, as we have just explained, in four principal forms was most clearly recognized by Lin Chi who formulated them into what is now usually known as the Four Standards of Lin Chi.

The expression "Four Standards" means four basic standards by which a Zen master might measure the degrees of perfection of his disciples. It is noteworthy, however, that this particular expression, or this particular understanding of the matter, did not originate from Lin Chi himself. It does not necessarily represent his own understanding of the issue. The expression has its origin rather in the historical fact that in the course of the development of the Lin Chi school, the four states as described by Lin Chi came to be used very

[41] We have earlier encountered the same question in the anecdote concerning Chao Chou's cypress tree in the courtyard, cf. p. 124.

often by the masters in measuring the depth of the Zen consciousness of the disciples. Lin Chi's intention was, we believe, primarily to establish theoretically the four principal forms which the same Field of Reality can assume, and thereby to indicate the dynamic structure of the Field.

Let us give in translation the relevant passage from the *Lin Chi Lu*.[42]

> Once at the time of the evening lesson, the Master told the monks under his guidance the following:
>
> "Sometimes the man (i.e., the "subject") is snatched away (i.e., totally negated) while the environment (i.e., the "object") is left intact. Sometimes the environment is snatched away, while the man is left intact. Sometimes the man and the environment are both snatched away. Sometimes the man and the environment are both left intact."
>
> Thereupon one of the monks came forward and asked, "What kind of a thing is the-man-being-snatched-away and the-environment-being-left-intact?"
>
> The Master answered, "As the mild sunshine of the springtime covers the entire earth, the earth weaves out a variegated brocade. The new-born baby has long-trailing hair; the hair is as white as a bundle of yarns."[43]
>
> The monk asked, "What kind of a thing is the-environment-being-snatched-away and the-man-being-left intact?"
>
> The Master answered, 'The royal command pervades the whole world;[44] the generals stationed on the frontiers do not raise the tumult of war."
>
> The monk asked, "What kind of a thing is the-man-and-the-environment-being-both-snatched-away?"
>
> The Master answered, "The two remote provinces have lost contact with the central Government."
>
> The monk asked, "What kind of a thing is the-man-and-the-environment-being-both-left-intact?"

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[42] *Op. cit.*, 25–26, pp. 34–35.

[43] The new-born baby with long white hair, i.e., baby-old man, being an impossibility, symbolically indicates the seeming non-existence of the man as the "subject."

[44] The whole energy of the Field is crystallized into One Man.

> The Master answered, "As the King looks down from the top of his palace, he sees the people in the field enjoying their peaceful life."

It is commonly held that of those four states, the last, i.e., the state in which both the man and the environment are left intact, represents the highest degree of the Zen consciousness. Ontologically it corresponds to what *Hua Yen* (*Kegon*) philosophy calls the "metaphysical dimension of the unobstructed mutual interpenetration among all things and events" (J.: *ji-ji muge hokkai*), a metaphysical dimension in which the world of Being appears as an infinitely huge network of gems, each one of which illumines and reflects all the others. And in the *Hua Yen* school, too, this "dimension" is considered to be the object of the highest and ultimate vision of Reality. But from the standpoint of a Zen master like Lin Chi, each one of the four states that have just been described is in itself a form of the total actualization of the Field. The Field, in other words, is of such a mobile and delicately flexible nature that if emphasis is laid on the "subjective" side, the whole thing turns into the Subject, while if on the contrary emphasis is laid on the "objective" side, the whole thing turns into the Object. Similarly, if nothing is seen, there is neither Subject nor Object. But if the emphasis is evenly diffused all over the Field, there is the Subject, there is the Object, and the world is seen as a vast, limitless Unity of a multiplicity of separate things. And whichever of these outer forms it may assume, the Field always remains in its original state, that of *I SEE THIS*.

Thus the Field is not to be confused with the purely "objective" aspect of the world of Being, i.e., Nature conceived as something existing outside the "mind." Nor is it to be confused with the purely "subjective" consciousness of man. That which establishes the "subject" as the "subject," or consciousness as consciousness, and the "object" as the "object," or Nature as Nature, is something that transcends — in a certain sense — this very distinction between "subject" and "object" and manifests itself, by self-determination, now as the Subject and now as the Object.

It is on such an understanding of the Field of Reality that Lin Chi

founds his characteristic image of Man. For him, Man *is* the Field. Man, in his view, is a personal, human actualization of the Field. And in fact there is absolutely no other type of actualization for the Field. The dynamics of the Field of Reality which we have analyzed is realizable only through the individual man, through the inner transformation of his consciousness. Man, in this sense, is *the* locus of the actualization of the whole universe. And when the actualization really takes place in this locus, the "man" is transformed into what is called by Lin Chi the "True Man without any ranks." As a total actualization of the Field, the True Man embodies the dynamics of the Field. Now he may realize himself as the *I* (= *I SEE THIS*); now he may be the (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS;* again, he can be Nothingness, that is, sheer (*I SEE THIS*); and he can also be the nakedly apparent *I SEE THIS*. He is completely free. Lin Chi refers to this kind of freedom which characterizes Man as the direct actualization of the Field when he speaks of "Man's becoming the absolute Master of the place, in whatever place he may happen to be."[45]

Thus Lin Chi's image of Man, if looked at from the common-sense viewpoint proves to be something extremely difficult to grasp. It is difficult to grasp because it presents "man" in a contradictory way. The image must necessarily take on a contradictory form, because the Field of Reality which forms its basis is itself a contradictory unity of the sensible and the supra-sensible.

The image of Man presented by Lin Chi is not primarily an image of the sensible "man" who sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, speaks with his tongue, and so on and so forth — in short "man" as the self-conscious empirical ego. Rather it is the image of the supra-sensible Man who, existing above the level of empirical experience, activates all the sense organs and makes the intellect function as it does. And yet, on the other hand, this supra-sensible, supra-empirical

[45] *Op. cit.*, 36, p. 60.

Man, cannot actualize himself independently of the empirical "man."

Thus man, inasmuch as he is a *total* actualization of the Field of Reality, is on the one hand a Cosmic Man comprehending in himself the whole universe — "the Mind-Reality," as Lin Chi says, "which pervades and runs through the whole world of Being" — and on the other he is this very concrete individual "man" who exists and lives here and now, as a concentration point of the entire energy of the Field. He is individual and supra-individual.

If we are to approach Man from his "individual" aspect, we shall have to say that in the concrete individual person there lives another person. This second person in himself is beyond all limitations of time and space, because the Field, of which he is the most immediate embodiment, is the Eternal Now and the Ubiquitous Here. But always and everywhere he accompanies, or is completely unified with, the concrete individual person. In fact Lin Chi does not admit any discrepancy at all between the two persons. Whatever the individual man does is done by the universal person. When, for instance, the former walks, it is in reality the latter that walks. The universal person acts only through the limbs of the individual person. It is this double structure of personality that Lin Chi never wearies of trying to make his disciples realize by themselves and through themselves.

But in most cases his disciples get simply confused and dismayed. For the moment they try to turn their attention to the universal person in themselves, he disappears. When they walk naturally, he is there with them; he is walking with them; or rather it is he who is walking by their feet. But the moment they become conscious of their own act of walking while they are walking, the universal man is no longer there; he has already receded to where they know not. This seemingly strange phenomenon is due to the very simple fact that paying attention to something, turning the spotlight of consciousness toward something means objectifying it. The universal man, being the absolute Selfhood, i.e., pure subjectivity, must necessarily cease to

be himself as soon as he is put into the position of an "object."

Despite this difficulty Lin Chi with extraordinary stringency requires his disciples to grasp immediately, without ever objectifying it, this absolute unity of the two persons in themselves.

> One day the Master took his seat in the lecture hall and said: "Over the bulky mass of your reddish flesh there is a True Man without any rank. He is constantly coming in and going out through the openings of your own face (i.e., your sense organs). If you have not yet encountered him, catch him, catch him here and now!"
>
> At that moment a monk came out and asked, "What kind of a fellow is this True Man?"
>
> The Master came down from his seat, grabbed at the monk, and urged him, "Tell me, you tell me!"
>
> The monk shrank for an instant.
>
> The Master on the spot thrust him away and said, "Ah, what a useless dirt-scraper this True-Man-without-any-rank of yours is!" And immediately he retired to his private quarters.

The monk "shrank for an instant," that is, he prepared himself for giving an adequate answer. But in that very instant, the discriminating act of thinking intrudes itself; the True Man becomes objectified and is lost. The True Man, when he is represented as an "object," is nothing more than a "dried up dirt-scraper." The Master grabbed at the monk with violence, urging him to witness on the spot the True Man who is no other than the monk's true Self. The Master resorted to such seemingly violent and unreasonable behavior because he wanted the monk to encounter the True Man in his pure subjectivity, without objectifying him. The monk, however, failed to do so. He did objectify his own True Man by attempting, if only for a fraction of an instant, to *think about* him instead of *becoming* or simply *being* the True Man. But once objectified in this way, the True Man is no longer "without any rank"; he is qualified by all sorts of determinations and delimitations in terms of time and space. The "now" is no longer the Eternal Now as it is actualized at this very moment. The "here" is no longer the Ubiquitous Here as it is actualized in this very place.

The image of the True Man as given in the passage which we have just read; namely, the image of Someone coming into the fleshy body and going out of it at every moment, is in reality a rhetorical device. The truth is that it is wrong even to talk about two persons being unified into one person. The two persons whom our analytic intellect distinguishes one from the other and which the rhetorical device presents as (1) the bulky mass of reddish flesh and (2) the True Man transcending all temporal and spatial determinations, are in reality an absolutely one and unitary person. The True Man as understood by Lin Chi is the sensible *and* super-sensible person in an absolute unity prior even to the bifurcation into the sensible and the super-sensible.

What constitutes the most salient feature of Lin Chi's thought in terms of the history of Zen philosophy is the fact that he crystallized into such a lively image of Man what we have been discussing in the course of the present paper, first under the traditional Buddhist key-term, "No-Mind" or "Mind" and then under the modern philosophical key-term "Field." As we have often pointed out, Lin Chi's entire thinking centers around Man, and a whole world-view is built up upon the basis of the image of the True Man. What he actually deals with under the name of Man is, objectively speaking, almost the same as what is usually referred to in Mahāyāna Buddhism in general by such words as Reality, Nothingness, Is-ness, Mind, etc. But his particular approach to the problem casts an illuminating light on one of the most characteristic traits of Oriental philosophy; namely, the decisive importance given to the subjective dimension of man in determining the objective dimension in which the Reality discloses itself to him. And in particular, it brings home to us the fact that, according to Zen, the highest dimension of Reality, i.e., the Reality in its absolutely naked and unblemished originality, becomes visible to us only and exclusively at the extreme limit of our own subjectivity, that is, when we become through and through ourselves.

SENSE AND NONSENSE IN ZEN BUDDHISM

ERANOS 39
(1970)

I

Last year my topic was the structure of Selfhood in Zen Buddhism. This time, in accordance with the general theme of the year, I want to discuss the problem of meaning and meaningfulness in Zen.

These two problems, namely the problem of the basic structure of Selfhood and that of language and meaning are, as we shall see, closely and inseparably connected with each other. Or, rather we should say that the latter is essentially related to and ultimately reducible to the former. For whichever aspect of Zen one may take up, and from whichever angle one may approach it, one is sure to be brought back ultimately to the problem of Selfhood.

With this basic understanding, I shall turn immediately to the topic of meaningfulness about which Zen raises a number of interesting problems. As one could imagine, the problems are raised in a very peculiar context, for language in Zen tends to be used in quite an unnatural way. In the context of Zen, language usually does not remain in its natural state. It is often distorted to the degree of becoming almost meaningless and nonsensical.

The problem of meaning in Zen Buddhism is thus interesting in rather a paradoxical sense because most of the typical Zen sayings are

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The theme of Eranos 39 (1970), that is, the 39th Eranos Conference Yearbook, which is the compilation of lectures given at the Eranos Conference in 1970, was "Mensch und Wort — Man and Speech — L'homme et le verbe."

obviously devoid of meaning and nonsensical if we observe them from the point of view of our ordinary understanding of language. Language exists for the purpose of communication between men. Where there is no need for communication, there is no need of saying anything. This basic principle applies to Zen as well. When we observe two persons engaged in talking with each other in a Zen context, we naturally get the impression that communication of some sort is taking place between them. But we observe at the same time a very strange fact, namely, that the words that are exchanged do not make sense, that they are mostly meaningless or nonsensical to us, outside observers. How could there be communication at all when the words used do not make sense? What kind of communication will it be, when it is made through nonsensical utterances? Such indeed is the most important question that confronts us at the outset as soon as we approach Zen from the point of to view of meaningful communication.

In order to bring into focus the very core of the whole question, let us begin by giving a typical example of nonsensical communication at the pre-linguistic level of behavior, that is, communication through gesture. In Zen Buddhism, gesture plays practically the same role as language, except that language presents a far more complicated structure, because as we shall see later, language involves the very important factor of articulation, i.e., the semantic articulation of reality, which is foreign to the use of gestures. But precisely because of this simplicity and non-complexity, gesture is perhaps more appropriate than language in giving us a preliminary idea as to where the central problem lies.

The example I am going to give is a very famous one. It is found in the *kōan* collection *Wu Mên Kuan* (J.: *Mumon Kan*), No. III; it is also found in another celebrated *kōan* collection, *Pi Yen Lu* (J.: *Hekigan Roku*), No. XIX. It is an anecdote known as the one-finger-Zen of Master Chü Chih (J.: Gutei).

The hero of the anecdote is Chü Chih, a famous Zen Master of the ninth century. This Master, whenever and whatever he was asked

about Zen, used to stick up one finger. Raising one finger without saying anything was his invariable answer to any question whatsoever he was asked concerning Zen. "What is the supreme and absolute Truth?" — answer: the silent raising of one finger. "What is the essence of Buddhism?" — answer: again the selfsame silent raising of one finger.

Now in terms of the normal circumstances of life, this action does not make sense, for the simple raising of one finger in no way constitutes a reasonable answer to any of the questions asked, except perhaps when the question runs: "Where is your finger?" The answer is not understandable, and since it is not understandable, it is no answer; and being no answer, it is nonsensical. Yet on the other hand, we feel in our perplexed mind something which persistently tells us that there must be some hidden meaning in Master Chü Chih's raising one finger, that it cannot be a total nonsense. What then is this hidden meaning which Master Chü Chih supposedly wanted to convey by silently sticking up one finger? That precisely is the problem. I shall explain the meaning of Chü Chih's one-finger-Zen later on. At this stage there are many other things to be clarified in a preliminary way in order that we might grasp the core of the whole question.

The anecdote, by the way, has not come to an end. It has a very important sequel. Master Chü Chih had a young disciple, a boy apprentice, who followed the Master, serving him at home and out of doors. Having observed his Master's pattern of behavior, this boy himself began to raise one finger whenever people asked him questions about Zen in the absence of the Master. At first, the Master did not notice it, and everything went well for some time. But the fatal moment came at last. The Master came to hear about what the boy had been doing behind his back. The story runs as follows.

One day, the Master hid a knife in the sleeve, summoned the boy to his presence, and said, "I hear that you have understood the essence of Buddhism. Is it true?" The boy replied, "Yes, it is." Thereupon the Master asked, "What is the Buddha?" The boy in answer stuck up one finger. Master Chü Chih suddenly took hold of the boy

and cut off with the knife the finger which the boy had just raised. As the poor boy was running out of the room screaming with pain, the Master called to him. The boy turned round. At that very moment, quick as lightning came the Master's question: "What is the Buddha?" Almost by conditioned reflex, we might say, the boy held up his hand to raise his finger. There was no finger there. The boy on the spot attained enlightenment.

The anecdote may very well be fiction. But, fictitious or real, it is indeed a very interesting and significant anecdote. It is interesting and significant not only because the story is narrated in an atmosphere of high dramatic tension, but also, and mainly, because the whole anecdote is an admirable dramatization of what we might call Zen experience. Zen experience is embodied not solely in the last crucial stage at which the boy attains enlightenment. The whole story, from the very beginning till the end is alive with the spirit of Zen. Each single event in the story represents in a dramatic way a particular stage in the evolvement of Zen consciousness. For the moment, however, we shall refrain from going further into the analytic elucidation of the actual content of this anecdote. Our immediate concern is with a more formal aspect of the story.

Let us remark that the anecdote is interesting as a dramatization of the evolvement of Zen consciousness only in an authentically Zen context. In other words, the anecdote tells something positive, it makes sense, it is meaningful, only to those who are already familiar with Zen or something similar to it in another religious tradition. Otherwise the whole anecdote would naturally remain nonsensical in the sense that no stage in the evolvement of the story will really be understandable. To begin with, why did Master Chü Chih stick up one finger whenever he was asked any question about Buddhism? Why did he cut off the finger of the boy who imitated him? How did the boy attain enlightenment when he wanted to raise his finger which was no longer there? Nothing is understandable except to those who have an inside knowledge of the Zen theory and practice.

What is so meaningful to a Zen Buddhist may thus be completely

meaningless to an outsider. Moreover, even within the narrowly limited context of this anecdote, the act of raising one finger was meaningful in the case of the Master while exactly the same act was judged to be meaningless and nonsensical when it occurred as an imitation by the disciple. Again the selfsame act of raising one finger by the disciple suddenly assumed a decisive importance and turned meaningful at the moment when it came in the form of the raising of a non-finger. All these observations would seem to lead us toward thinking that Zen must have a definite standard by which it can judge anything, whether verbal or non-verbal, to be meaningful or meaningless as the case may be, and that, further, it must be quite an original standard, totally different from the standard of meaningfulness which is normally applied in ordinary situations, so much so that a judgment passed by the Zen standard could — and very often is — diametrically opposed to the judgment given in accordance with the ordinary standard.

Indeed I may as well have entitled my lecture "The Problem of the Criterion for Meaningfulness in Zen Buddhism." For such in fact is the matter which I want to discuss in the present paper. In other words, the main problem that will concern us is whether there is such a thing as the criterion for meaningfulness in Zen, and if there *is* one, whether there is any reliable means by which we can come to know the inner make-up of that criterion.

II

Meaningfulness is evidently a matter of primary concern for the contemporary intellectuals. In the field of philosophy, as the result of the development of British empiricism and American positivism with their extraordinary emphasis upon the problems of meaning, the concept of meaningfulness (and meaninglessness) of what we say has become one of the major intellectual problems.

Even in ordinary non-philosophic situations, we are often reminded of the importance of "making sense." We often find

ourselves saying, "It makes sense," or "It makes no sense," and the like. And this kind of judgment is always accompanied by valuation, positive or negative; or it is itself a value judgment. Not-making-sense is nothing other than talking nonsense, saying something absurd and ridiculous. Talking nonsense is felt to be something we should be ashamed of. Thus we naturally try avoid talking nonsense.

A number of popular books have been written in recent years, which purport to teach us how we could avoid falling into the pitfalls of nonsensical talk or nonsensical thinking. Thus, to give a few examples, the general semanticist Mr. Irving J. Lee has written a book entitled: *How to Talk with People* carrying a significant subtitle which reads: *A program for preventing troubles that come when people talk together.* Another book of a more serious nature by Professor Lionel Ruby is entitled: *The Art of Making Sense*, with the subtitle: *A guide to logical thinking.* These and other similar works analyze in great detail the pitfalls of nonsense and try to guide the people toward what is called straight thinking. Otherwise expressed, the authors of these books are concerned with how we can use language meaningfully. Making-sense is now an art. It is a special technique considered to be indispensable in modern life.

It is very interesting to remark that from such a point of view almost all the famous Zen sayings typify sheer nonsense. That is to say, Zen sayings do not in the majority of cases satisfy the criterion for meaningfulness that is described in these books. What is still more remarkable is the fact that, from the viewpoint of Zen, those ordinary words and propositions that fully satisfy the normal criterion for meaningfulness can very well be meaningless, even nonsensical. The so-called "straight" thinking and the so-called "meaningful" talk may from the Zen point of view be judged to be "crooked" and meaningless because they tend to distort and deform what Zen regards as the reality of things. Zen says for example:[1]

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[1]In the *kōan* system of Master Hakuin — a celebrated Japanese Zen Master of the Lin Chi (J.: Rinzai) school, 1685–1768, who was the first to systematize

Empty-handed, I hold a spade in my hands,
I am walking on foot, but on the back of an ox I ride,
As I pass over the bridge, lo,
The water does not flow, it is the bridge that flows.

This saying which, as everybody sees, consists entirely of glaring contradictions does make good sense in Zen. Indeed, in a Zen context, to say: "I am empty-handed and I have a spade in the hands; I walk on foot and I ride on the back of an ox; The water stands still while the bridge flows," makes even better sense than saying: "I am not empty-handed because I have a spade in my hands; I am walking on foot, therefore I am not riding on the back of an ox; The river flows and the bridge stands still." How and on what basis can this kind of nonsensical saying be said to make good sense in Zen? Before answering this crucial question, I shall give here one more example of Zen nonsense of somewhat different nature. It is an extremely short *kōan* recorded in the above-mentioned *Wu Mên Kuan* (J.: *Mumon Kan*), No. XVIII. It reads:

A monk asked Master Tung Shan: "What is the Buddha?"
Tung Shan replied: "Three pounds of flax!"

Tung Shan (J.: Tōzan, 910-990) is a disciple of the celebrated Master Yün Mên (J.: Ummon) of the tenth century (?-949), himself being also an outstanding Zen Master. One day he was weighing flax. Just at that moment a monk came up to him and suddenly flung this question at him: "What is the Buddha?", a question which in the Western word would be equivalent to "What is God?" or "What is

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kōan into several fundamental categories in terms of the grades of perfection to be actualized in the Zen student — this saying is classified as belonging in the second category called *kikan*, i.e., free and flexible machinery. The *kōans* in this category are those that are used by the Master for the purpose of training the students who have already passed the first stage of enlightenment so that they might develop a capability of infinitely free, flexible, and unobstructed actions in whatever situations they may find themselves. Most of the *kōans* of this category are of glaring irrationality and illogicality.

absolute Reality?" Instantaneously came Tung Shan's answer: "Three pounds of flax!" The Zen documents abound in examples of this type. Thus, to give one more example, Yün Mên, the teacher of Tung Shan, when asked exactly the same question by a monk, answered by simply saying: "A dried-up dirt-scraper!"

> Once a monk asked Yün Mên, "What is the Buddha?"
> Mên replied: "A dried-up dirt-scraper!"

That is all. To an outsider, these short dialogues would be nothing more than sheer nonsense. But at least one may notice the existence of a definite pattern underlying these two instances of Zen dialogue. As an answer to the metaphysical question concerning the Absolute, both Tung Shang and Yün Mên just thrust under the interlocutor's nose a concrete object in a verbal form: "three pounds of flax" in the case of Tung Shan, and a "dried-up," i.e., useless "dirt-scraper" in the case of Yün Mên. Tung Shan was most probably weighing the flax when he was asked the metaphysical question. He answered on the spot by the most concrete thing that happened to be there in his hands.

Zen likes the most concrete. It is one of its characteristics. Examples can be given indefinitely from the old Zen records. In terms of the problem of meaningfulness, one might naturally be reminded of the principle of verification as it has been developed by the contemporary positivist philosophers. Verifiability is for them the ultimate criterion for meaningfulness. Only what is verifiable by experience is acceptable as real; accordingly a word or proposition is meaningful if and only if there are possible sense-perceptions which verify the presence of the object or the event indicated. "God" or the "Absolute" is a typical example of those words that are considered meaningless because there is no possible sense-perception that would verify the existence of such an entity.

On the face of it, Zen which evinces special liking for concrete things would seem to behave in conformity with the rule of verification set up by the positivists. Zen daringly commands its students to

"kill the Buddha," "kill the Patriarchs," in short, to kill God! Instead of talking about God and the Absolute, Zen Masters talk about "three pounds of flax," "a dried-up dirt-scraper," "the oak tree in the courtyard of the temple," and the like. These words and phrases are perfectly meaningful by the positivist criterion for meaningfulness, because they are all verifiable, particularly because they are usually uttered in the very presence of the sensible objects.

Yet all these words turn completely meaningless and nonsensical as soon as we place them in their original contexts. That is to say, none of these expressions makes sense as a constituent part of the whole dialogue. "What is the true significance of Bodhidharma's coming from India to China?" a monk asks (*A*). Chao Chou (J.: Jōshū, 778-897) answers: "The oak tree in the courtyard of the temple (*B*)."[2] The dialogue is nonsensical because there can apparently be no communication between the monk who asks the question and the Master who answers, because there is no reasonable connection between *A* and *B*.

III

In the course of its historical development, Zen has produced a huge amount of documentary records. The earliest form of them is represented by what is known as the "records of sayings" (Ch.: *yü lu*, J.: *goroku*), i.e., the collections of the Sayings of Great Masters, which began to enjoy remarkable popularity in the eighth and ninth centuries. Unlike the Mahāyāna Sūtras, which had been predominant up to these periods and in which all the cardinal teachings were put into the mouth of the Buddha himself, the Records of Sayings were all records of what individual Zen Masters said and how they behaved. Moreover, a Record of Sayings does not purport to present a continuous and coherent description of the life of a Zen Master in the form of a biography; it consists merely of a series of fragmentary

[2] *Wu Mên Kuan*, No. XXXII.

records of sayings and doings of a Master in daily circumstances.

The core of the Records of Sayings is constituted by *mondōs,* each of which is a personal dialogue that takes place in a very concrete situation between the Master and a disciple or a visiting monk. It is typical of the *mondō* that it consists in most cases in one single question and one single answer. The dialogue is therefore mostly of extreme concision and brevity. It is a real verbal fight. And the fight is over almost instantaneously, just like a contest fought with real swords by two masters of Japanese swordsmanship. There is no room here for a *dialektike.* The Zen dialogue does not last long, unlike a Platonic dialogue, which can last interminably to the utmost limit of the logical development and intellectual elaboration of a given theme.

Rather, the Zen dialogue aims at grasping the ultimate and eternal Truth in a momentary flash of words that are exchanged between two living persons at the extreme point of spiritual tension, and that in a concrete and unique situation of life. The momentary dialogue may result in producing what would strike the outsiders as sheer nonsense. No matter. For in the view of the two participants the fight has been fought. The eternal Truth may or may not have been glimpsed. No matter. The Truth has flashed for a moment.

The nature of the Zen dialogue discloses in the most salient form the typically Chinese way of thinking, which consists in aiming at grasping immediately and on the spot this or that aspect of the eternal Truth in a real, concrete situation which is never to be repeated. This feature of the Chinese way of thinking, is observable, albeit in a far less tense form, in the *Analects of Confucius* (Ch.: *Lun Yü,* J.: *Rongo*). It is a mode of thinking which is essentially different from those forms of thinking that are developed on the abstract and theoretical level of the intellect and reason. It is, on the contrary, a peculiar mode of thinking that evolves in the midst of concrete life prompted by some concrete event or concrete thing. This typically Chinese form of thought was once overwhelmed by the development in China of logical and discursive ways of thinking under the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which had preceded the rise of Zen

Buddhism. With Zen it came back again to life in the periods extending from the T'ang dynasty down to the Sung dynasty. Many of the representative dialogues that we find in the Records of Sayings were codified in the Sung dynasty between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries in the form of *kōans* as effective means of educating and training Zen students.

It will have been understood that the words used in a way peculiar to Zen are all words uttered, as it were, in limit-situations. Hence the characteristic distortion or deformation of ordinary language as we observe it in the *mondōs*. Zen does not shun or despise language. It only requires that language be used in a very peculiar way, not indiscriminately. It requires that the words should come out of one specific source which we may call "the primary dimension of Reality." The structure of this dimension of Reality will be analyzed later on. For the moment let us be content with remarking that what is of decisive importance for Zen, in this respect, is the source from which words issue forth. The kind of language that has its source and basis in the ordinary level of consciousness is for Zen meaningless. Perfect silence is far better than meaningless talk. The famous watchword of Zen: "No use of words and letters" refers to this aspect of the Zen attitude toward language.

In a passage of his *Structural Anthropology*, M. Lévi-Strauss mentions two different attitudes toward the use of language and distinguishes between them in terms of cultural patterns. He says: "Among us [i.e., in European culture], language is used in a rather reckless way — we talk all the time, we ask questions about many things. This is not at all a universal situation. There are cultures... which are rather thrifty in relation to language. They don't believe that language should be used indiscriminately but only in certain specific frames of reference and somewhat sparingly."[3]

I do not know whether or not M. Lévi-Strauss was actually

[3]Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Structural Anthropology*, Eng. tr., Doubleday Anchor Book, New York, 1967, p. 67.

thinking of Oriental cultures when he wrote these lines. In any case the description he gives of the second of the two cultural patterns applies exactly to the linguistic aspect of Zen.

The word "Zen" naturally reminds us of the practice of *zazen*, i.e., sitting cross-legged in meditation. In the state of *zazen* language is to stop functioning, even the inner or mental speech, not to speak of external speech. Language is simply an impediment in the way of the concentration of the mind. It must be completely done away with. But once out of the stage of meditation, the Zen student may at any moment be asked by the Master to "say something, say something," to use language — not indiscriminately, of course, but in a very specific frame of reference. In fact, in a certain sense no living religion attaches greater importance to speaking and talking than Zen Buddhism. The Master constantly urges the student to open the mouth and say something. He commands him: "Bring me a phrase!" i.e., a decisive phrase. Asking the student to say something constitutes an integral part of the educational process of Zen. For the moment he opens the mouth and "brings a decisive phrase," the student discloses to the eyes of the Master the exact degree of his spiritual maturity.

It is important to remark, however, that the linguistic behavior which is asked of the student here is of an extremely specific nature. It consists neither in speaking in an ordinary way nor in keeping silent. What is required is that words should gush out from a certain dimension of consciousness which is totally different from the dimension of speaking and not speaking.

One of the celebrated "Three Key Phrases" (*san chuan yü*)[4] of Master SungYüan. (J.: Shōgen, 1132-1202) was: "Speaking is not a matter

[4] *Chuan yü* (J.: *ten go*) literally means "turning (*chuan*) word." It means (1) a word (or series of words) that naturally springs forth from the "turning-point" of consciousness, as well as (2) a word that could cause a "turning-point" in the consciousness of one who listens to it. To be able to utter such a "turning" word is considered an indubitable sign of the subject's having attained enlightenment. The *kōan* here in question is found in the *Wu Mên Kuan*, No. XX.

of moving the tongue." That is to say, in the view of Zen, it is not with the tongue that man speaks. Another famous Master, Pai Chang (J.: Hyakujō, 720-814), is related to have once asked his disciples: "How will it be possible for you to speak in a state in which your throat, lips and mouth have been snatched away?"[5] He is here urging his disciples to say something without using the throat, lips and mouth. This seemingly unreasonable request simply indicates that language as understood in an authentic Zen context consists in the act of speaking in which the vocal organs, though actually activated, remain inactivated as if they were not used.

In order to understand this point we must remember that as a branch for Mahāyāna Buddhism, Zen upholds — at least at the initial stage of theorizing[6] — a fundamental distinction between two levels of Reality. One is what is called the "sacred truth" *shêng ti* (J.: *shō tai*) corresponding to the Sanskrit *paramārtha-satya;* and the other is the "customary or worldly truth" *su ti* (J.: *zoku tai*) corresponding to the *saṃvṛtti-satya.* The former which is also called in Zen Buddhism the "primary truth," refers to a very specific view of Reality which is disclosed to man only through the actual experience of enlightenment. The inner structure of the primary level of Reality will be elucidated in what follows. The "customary truth" which is also called the "secondary truth" refers, on the contrary, to the common-sense view of Reality as it appears to the eyes of ordinary people.

From the standpoint of Zen, the normal exchange of words as we usually understand it by such words as "speech," "speaking," "language," and "dialogue," belongs to the level of the "secondary truth," while what is understood by these words in a Zen context belongs

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[5] *Pi Yen Lu* (J.: *Hekigan Roku*) No. LXX, LXXI, LXXII.

[6] At the more advanced stages subsequent to the attainment of enlightenment, the distinction itself becomes obliterated because at such stages Zen makes no distinction between the "sacred" and the "vulgar." The famous dictum of Master Nan Ch'üan (J.: Nansen, 748-834): "The ordinary common mind — that *is* the Way" is a direct expression of such an attitude. (See *Wu Mên Kuan*, No. XIX).

to the level of the "primary truth." When words are uttered or exchanged in this latter dimension of Reality, they give rise to a very strange and unusual situation.

(1) The fundamental structure of speech or *parole* as defined by Ferdinand de Saussure is no longer observable in this dimension, for there is no distinction here between the speaker and the hearer. What is actually seen is a spectacle of words flowing out from no one knows where, glittering for a moment in the air like a flash of lightning, and immediately disappearing into the eternal darkness. Speech does occur, but it is a speech that occurs in a void space where the existence of the speaker and the hearer has completely lost its significance. Since there is neither speaker nor hearer, the act of speech is no speech. It does not constitute *parole* in the proper sense of the word.

(2) Another characteristic of speech in a Zen context is that language is deprived of its most basic function, i.e., the semantic articulation of reality. Of course, as long as a word is actually used, semantic articulation is still clearly and undeniably there — particularly when viewed with the eye of a man who has no idea at all of what Zen considers the primary level of Reality. But from the Zen point of view, it is as though the semantic articulation became transparent, permeable, flexible and non-resistant to such a degree that it is almost non-existent. One of the reasons why Zen sayings look completely nonsensical to the outsiders — take, for example, the above-cited *kōan* which asserts that the river stands still while the bridge flows — lies in the fact that the outsiders do not properly understand this peculiar transformation which the function of semantic articulation undergoes when a word is uttered in a Zen context. Let me explain this point a little further.

When, for instance, we say "table," the word naturally exercises its normal function of articulation. That is to say, the word cuts out a certain portion of reality and presents it to our mind as a specific thing called by that name, distinguishing it from all other things. The "table" is "table" just because it is different from all non-tables. And as uttered in a definite actual context, the word refers to a particular

table which is concretely existent there. The same holds true from the Zen point of view, too. To that extent Zen is still in the secondary or worldly dimension of Reality. As I have said before, however, semantic articulation in a Zen context is infinitely flexible. The articulated picture of reality is here permeable; it offers no resistance. That is to say, a product of articulation does not obstruct our view, forcing it to stop at that point. The "table," for instance, which is a product of articulation, does not obtrude itself in a Zen context as a solid semantic mass as it does in ordinary speech. Rather, it makes itself transparent so that it allows our view to go direct to the very source from which the form of the table has emerged. Through the articulated form of the "table" the primary level of Reality reveals itself in its original inarticulate state. This situation is what is usually referred to in Mahāyāna Buddhism as seeing a thing in its *tathatā* or Suchness. It is not the case, be it remarked, that the word "table" works as a symbol indicating Something-beyond. Rather, the "table" in its verbal form is itself the most immediate presentation of the primary level of Reality.

(3) I would point out as the third characteristic of the use of language in Zen the fact that the content of whatever is said in a Zen context in the form of a proposition does not constitute an independent, semantic (or representational) entity. This is but a direct sequence of the second characteristic which has just been explained.

When we say for example, "The table is square" or "The sky is blue" in the secondary or customary dimension of Reality, the proposition produces in the mind of the hearer a kind of semantic entity standing out against the background of silence. In the primary dimension of Reality, on the contrary, no such independent mental unit is produced. For no sooner is the proposition uttered than it becomes totally dissolved into its original source which is nothing other than the primary dimension of Reality. We can also express the same idea from its reverse side by saying that whatever is said is in itself a total and integral presentation of the primary dimension of Reality. The proposition: "The sky is blue" is not an objective

description of nature. Nor is it a subjective expression of the speaker's psychological state. It is a momentary self-presentation of the absolute Reality itself. And as such, the proposition does not *mean* anything: it does not indicate or point to anything other than itself.

In a far more poetic way, Master Tung Shan (J.: Tōzan, 807-869)[7] in his celebrated Zen poem *Pao Ching San Mei* (J.: *Hōkyō San-mai*) expressed this state of affairs as follows:

> Snow heaped up in a silver bowl,
> A white heron hidden in the light of the full moon,
> The two are alike, yet not the same,
> Interfused, yet each having its own place.

The "silver bowl" symbolizes the primary, inarticulate Reality while "snow" symbolizes a piece of articulated Reality. Likewise the "light of the full moon" and the "white heron." "The two are alike," i.e., the two things, being of the same color, are not clearly distinguishable from one another. Yet they are not the same, i.e., the "snow" *is* "snow" and the "bird" *is* "bird."

The absolute Reality or the primary level of Reality as understood by Zen has no real name; it is impossible to be presented verbally in its absoluteness. But when a Zen Master in a moment of extreme spiritual tension says: "The sky is blue," the unnamable Reality becomes named and presented in this particular form. The timeless Reality glitters and flashes for a moment in a time-space dimension. In so far as it appears in the articulate form of the-sky-being-blue, it is distinguishable; it is distinguished from the original inarticulate Reality as well as from what is expressed by all other propositions. Yet in so far as it is an immediate and naked presentation of the inarticulate Reality, it is not to be distinguished from the latter.

Following in Tōzan's footsteps, a Zen Master of the tenth century,

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[7]Tung Shan Liang Chieh (J.: Tōzan Ryōkai), founder of the Ts'ao Tung (J.: Sōtō) sect in Zen Buddhism, to be distinguished from Tung Shan to whom reference has earlier been made (Section II).

Pa Ling (J.: Haryō, exact dates unknown), when asked: "What kind of a thing is the Deva sect?" answered: "It is snow piled up in a silver bowl."[8] "Deva" refers to Kāna-Deva, a disciple of Nāgārjuna (J.: Ryūju, *ca.* 150-250). Kāna-Deva was noted for his philosophic capability. The "Deva sect" therefore refers to the philosophy of Nothingness (*śūnyatā*) which characterizes Nāgārjuna's Middle-Path position. Thus this anecdote shows that this peculiar view of the relation between the inarticulate Reality and its articulated forms is precisely what constitutes the core of Mahāyāna philosophy.

IV

The anecdote which has just been mentioned is interesting in that it incidentally brings to our attention the fact that the Zen approach to language has a historical background in the *Mādhyamika* or Middle-Path school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. But it must be noted that the philosophy of language of Zen is also related with the *Vijñaptimātratā* or Ideation-Only school going back to Vasubandhu (*ca.* 400-480).

In the history of Indian philosophy in general, the Mahāyāna philosophy of language stands diametrically opposed to the semantic theory upheld by the Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya schools. What characterizes the latter theory is the view that a word is a symbol for something existent in the external world. To every single word corresponds something that really exists. Whenever there is a word, one can be sure of the existence of a corresponding object in the world; and conversely, whatever is knowable in the world is namable. This view is so predominant in the Vaiśeṣika school that in its ontology "existent" is called *padārtha*, i.e., the meaning of a word, or what is meant by a word.

Thus in the thought of this school, the very fact that we have the word "ox," for example, is by itself a definite proof that there *is* in the external world a particular substance designated by that name. Since,

[8] *Pi Yen Lu*, No. XIII.

further, we predicate of this substance various properties, saying: "The ox is white," "The ox walks" etc., we can be sure that properties like "whiteness," and "walking," etc. are also existent in the real world. And since the word "ox" applies universally to various kinds of ox (*e.g.*, walking, running, reposing, etc.), the ox as a universal must also exist in reality. Likewise the various properties that distinguish the universal-ox from other species of animal like horse, sheep, dog, etc.[9]

The ontology of Vaiśeṣika is an outspoken atomism in which all existents are considered ultimately reducible to atoms (*paramāṇu* meaning "extremely fine or small"). The atoms are the basic substances that are themselves invisible. An ox, for example, is a composite substance which is an aggregate of such atoms. A composite substance is a visible body; it is a new independent entity which is different from the atoms that are its constituent parts, just as a piece of cloth which is made of threads is in itself a different substance from the threads.

Both the Middle-Path school and the Ideation-Only school of Mahāyāna Buddhism take the position of radical opposition to such a view concerning the relation between language and reality. Language, Buddhism asserts, has no ontological significance. A word does not correspond to a piece of Reality. Words are merely signs established for the convenience of daily life. They have nothing to do with the structure of Reality. The Vaiśeṣika school takes the position that to a word like "pot" or "table" there corresponds in the external world a real object, a substance. According to Buddhism this is merely a view proper to the secondary, i.e., worldly, level of Reality. The common people always think this way and their whole scheme of life and behavior is formed on this very basis. From the point of view of the primary level of Reality, however, all this is false and even sheer

[9]On the universals as the referents of words according to Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, see R.C. Pandeya: *The Problem of Meaning in Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1963, pp. 193-199.

nonsense. A "table," for example, is not a substance endowed with an unchanging, eternally self-identical nature. In other words, it is in reality "nothing," for it contains in itself no permanent ontological solidity. But as a phenomenal existent, the table *appears* as if it really existed, just as a phantom or the moon reflected in the water appears as if it existed. According to the doctrine upheld by the Ideation-Only school, it is language that induces such a false view of Reality.

Language is inseparably connected with conceptualization. The meaning of the word is universalized into a concept, and the seeming solidity and permanence of the concept is readily projected onto the structure of the world. Thus "table" comes to appear as a self-subsistent entity having real solidity and permanence. The same is true of the properties of the table such as its colors and forms.

In *Triṃśikā-vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* (XX) Vasubandhu declares that all those "things" that are produced by this natural tendency of the human mind are nothing but so many falsely imagined forms of being and that they are really non-existent. Man is accustomed, Vasubandhu argues, to imagine the existence of an external object corresponding to a word — the object-table, for example, corresponding to the word-"table." He imagines in addition that the eye exists as the organ of perceiving the object-table. In truth what really deserves to be said to "exist" is only the act of perception as a continuous stream of consciousness (*citta-saṃtāna*) which goes on changing its actual content from moment to moment. Both the object-table and the eye which perceives it are products of the discriminating function of the mind which takes out these subjective and objective entities by analysis from the stream of consciousness. Man simply ignores thereby the fact that the content of consciousness differs from moment to moment. Thus man falsely posits "table" as a universal which remains the same in spite of all the differences in time and space. Strictly speaking, however, even this particular table which I am perceiving at this present moment is different from the so-called same table which I perceived one moment ago as it will be different from the table which I shall be perceiving after a moment. And as the object-table

changes from moment to moment, the eye that perceives it is also different from moment to moment. Needless to say, the eye that perceives a round table is not the same as the eye that perceives a square table. Thus the eye, no less than the object, is something falsely posited by imagination under the influence of the articulating function of language. And these false entities are phenomenal forms that spring forth interminably from the deep potential powers which remain stored in the Subconscious known in this school as the *ālaya*-consciousness.

In a similar way Nāgārjuna, founder of the Middle-path school and the representative of the philosophy of Nothingness, asserts that the so-called essence is nothing but a hypostatization of word-meaning. The word, he says, is not of such a nature that it indicates a real object. Instead of being a sure guarantee of the existence of an ontological essence, every word is itself a mere baseless mental construct whose meaning is determined by the relation in which it stands to other words. Thus the meaning of a word immediately changes as soon as the whole network of which it is but a member changes even slightly.

The ordinary people, living as they do in accordance with the "worldly view" (*lokavyavahāra*) which is based on linguistic convention, cannot but exist in a world composed of an infinite number of different things that are nothing but hypostatized word-meanings. This linguistically articulated view of the world is superimposed upon Reality as it really is in its original pure inarticulation, in its limitless openness as Zen calls it. But the ordinary people are not aware of this latter stratum of Reality.

Nāgārjuna argues that the first of these two dimensions, i.e., the linguistically articulated world is sheer imagination. What really *is* is the dimension of Reality before it is analytically grasped through the network of articulating words. That pre-linguistic Reality is the Reality, i.e., Nothingness (*śūnyatā*). The word *śūnyatā* refers to the original metaphysical state of absolute Reality where there are no falsely posited, fixed things. The simple fact that there are absolutely no fixed

essences behind the ever-changing forms of phenomena, when subjectively realized by man, constitutes the highest Truth. When man attains to this highest stage and looks back from this vantage point, he discovers that the very distinction which he initially made between the primary or "sacred" level of Reality and the secondary or "vulgar" level of Reality was but sheer imagination. Even the "sacred" is an articulated piece of Reality, which distinguishes itself from what is not "sacred."

The *kōan* No. 1 of the *Pi Yen Lu* describes this situation in a very brisk and concise way which is typical of Zen thinking. The Emperor Wu of Liang asks Bodhidharma: "What is the primary meaning of the sacred Truth?" To this Bodhidharma answers: "Limitlessly open! Nothing sacred!"

A limitlessly open circle that has its center everywhere and nowhere, defying all attempts at fixation — nothing here is fixed, nothing has essential boundaries. There is nothing to be permanently fixed as the "sacred." In this laconic answer the semi-legendary first Patriarch of Zen Buddhism epitomizes the central teaching of Nāgārjuna.[10]

V

It would be natural that language in such a special context should

[10]Friedrich Georg Jünger in his *Sprache und Denken*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1962, p. 218 (Chapter on *Bi-Yän-Lu*) shows a remarkably exact understanding of this *kōan*. He writes: "... Bodhidharma antwortet: 'Offene Weite — nichts von heilig.' Heiligkeit und offene Weite werden gegenübergestellt, und in dieser Weite verschwindet auch die Heiligkeit als eine das Bewusstsein einengende, starr machende Grenze. In die offene Weite dringt — sie ist kein Vakuum — alles ein, dringt so ein, dass es kommt und geht, durchgeht, vorübergeht. Der Standort, jeder Standort muss aufgegeben werden, muss verlassen werden. Die Leere hat keinen Punkt, in dem sie befestigt werden könnte; die offene Weite ist ohne Mittelpunkt und Peripherie."

raise grave semantic problems. It is, as we have remarked above, of the very nature of language to articulate Reality into fixed entities. Yet Zen demands that language be used without articulating a single thing.

> Master Shou Shan (J.: Shuzan, 926-993) held up his bamboo staff. Showing it to his disciples he said: "If you, monks, call this a bamboo staff, you fix it. If you don't call it a bamboo staff, you go against the fact. Tell me, you monks, right now: What will you call it?"

Against the philosophical background which has just been given, it will be easy to understand Master Shou Shan's intention. If you call a bamboo staff a "bamboo staff," you are simply hypostatizing the meaning of the word into a separate, self-subsistent substance, falsely articulating Reality as it really is in its limitless openness. If, on the contrary, you refuse to admit that it is a bamboo staff, if you say that it is *not* a bamboo staff, then you are going against the fact that Reality here and now is appearing in the phenomenal form of a bamboo staff.

Commenting upon this anecdote Master Wu Mên (J.: Mumon, 1183-1260), author of the *Wu Mên Kuan* says:

> If you call it a bamboo staff, you fix it. If you don't call it a bamboo staff, you go against the fact. Thus you can neither say something nor not say anything. (What is it then?) Tell me on the spot! Tell me on the spot![11]

"Tell me on the spot!" or "Say something at once!" is very significant in a Zen context of this nature. It means: "Say something decisive without reflection, without thinking!" For even the slightest reflection will immediately lead man away from the primary level of Reality. Rather, the primary level of Reality must be actualized on the spot in the form of a word or gesture gushing forth from a dimension of consciousness which is over and above articulation.

This *kōan* does not tell us whether or not there was among the disciples anybody who could give a proper response to Master Shou

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[11] *Wu Mên Kuan*, No. XLIII.

Shan's challenging question. There is, however, another *kōan* in the same book in which a disciple gives an appropriate answer to his Master's question in a similar situation.[12]

> Master Pai Chang (J.: Hyakujō)[13] brought out a water-bottle, put it on the floor, and asked a question: "If you are not to call it a water-bottle, what will you call it?"
> The head monk of the monastery answered by saying: "One could never call it a piece of wood!"
> Thereupon the Master turned to Wei Shan (J.: I San, 771-853) and asked him to give his answer.
> On the spot, Wei Shan turned over the water-bottle with his foot. The Master laughed and remarked: "The head monk has been beaten by this monk in the contest."

Wei Shan who was then in the position of *tien tsuo* (J.: *ten zo*) — *tien tsuo* is one who looks after the food of the monks in the monastery — was as the result of this victory chosen as the director of a newly-opened monastery. Later he became a first rate Master and opened a brilliant chapter in the history of Zen in China.

Let us now examine the meaning of this seemingly nonsensical behavior of Master Wei Shan. The answer given by the head monk is perfectly in accord with common sense. "One could never call it a piece of wood" — that is to say, "a bottle is a bottle; it can never be wood." The statement does make sense from the viewpoint of the secondary level of Reality. Philosophically it is essentialism that goes beyond Vaiśeṣika back to the central thesis of realism upheld by the Hīnayāna *Sarvāstivādin*. The thesis may be briefly summarized by the formula: *A* is *A*; it is not, it cannot be, anything other than *A*, because it is fixed to itself by its own permanent essence. As is easy to see, this ontological position collides head-on with the thesis of *niḥsvabhāva* or "non-essentialism" that has been advanced by Nāgārjuna.

It is to be remarked that as long as one remains attached to the

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[12] *Ibid.*, No. XL.

[13] Mentioned above, Section III, p. 149.

secondary level of Reality, one can never go out of the boundaries of this kind of simple realism. One may, while remaining on this level, become aware of the untenability of essentialism, and in order to break the magic spell of such a position call the water-bottle, for example, God or Buddha or even Nothing. One will still be within the domain of hypostatized word-meanings. For in the secondary dimension of Reality no sooner is a word like "God" or "Nothing" uttered than its semantic content becomes fixed and crystallized into a fixed entity having an essence of its own. Zen demands that one should rather jump into an entirely different dimension of Reality — the primary dimension — where *A* is neither *A* nor non-*A*, and yet, or just because of this, *A* is undeniably *A*. The water-bottle in this new dimension of Reality is neither a water-bottle nor a non-water-bottle, being over and above such a distinction, because this dimension is that of *śūnyatā* where no fixed essence is established. But just because of this absolute non-distinction and inarticulation, everything, anything can be a total manifestation of the whole Reality. A water-bottle *is* a water-bottle in this particular sense. In a water-bottle the whole *śūnyatā* is actualized. The water-bottle is not sustained by its own essence. It is sustained and backed by *śūnyatā*. Otherwise expressed, in a single water-bottle is contained the whole universe. It *is* the whole universe. Is the water-bottle in such a situation still a water-bottle? Yes and No. The young monk Wei Shan in the above-quoted *kōan* gave expression to this view by his seemingly irrational behavior.

It is against the background of such a view of Reality that the one-finger Zen of Master Chü Chih is to be understood. Mention was made, at the outset of this paper, of Master Chü Chih who had a strange habit of sticking up one finger in answer to whatever question he was asked about Zen. In the dimension of Reality in which the Master was living, the finger he raised was a no-finger, that is to say, it was an immediate and naked manifestation of that dimension itself in the form of a finger. In other words, when Chü Chih raised his finger, the whole universe was raised with it. The raising of one

finger in this dimension is nothing other than the instantaneous raising of the whole phenomenal world. The fundamental structure of the phenomenal world from such a point of view has been elucidated in the most magnificent way by the *Hua Yen* (J.: *Kegon*) school of Mahāyāna philosophy which flourished in China. Everything in the universe, this philosophy teaches, is a unique embodiment of the absolute Reality; everything is a mirror reflecting the supreme Light. And all the mirrors, each reflecting in itself the same supreme Light, reflect each other in such a way that each one of the mirrors reflects all the rest of the mirrors. The whole universe is represented as a limitless number of luminous mirrors facing one another so that the world is made to appear as an infinite mass of light with an unfathomable depth. In such a situation, the slightest movement of even one single mirror cannot but affect the whole world of light. And since in the phenomenal dimension all things are moving from moment to moment, and since each single movement of every single thing brings into being a new order of things, a new world is born afresh at every moment.

Referring to this *Hua Yen* view, Master Yüan Wu (J.: Engo, 1063-1135), the celebrated compiler of the *Pi Yen Lu*, says in his Introductory Remark to the above-mentioned *kōan* in which the one-finger Zen of Chü Chih is narrated:

> As a mote of dust flies up, the whole earth is said to rise therein; when a flower comes into bloom, its movement is said to vibrate the whole universe.
> Well, then, what is the state in which no dust yet rises, no flower yet blooms?

It goes without saying that the first two sentences refer to the phenomenal structure of Reality, while the third sentence is a reference to *śūnyatā*, the inarticulate oneness of Reality which may be compared to the supreme Light in the above-mentioned metaphor, that remains eternally unmoved and changeless through all the phenomenal forms in which it actualizes itself. Master Chü Chih who raised one finger was simply reproducing by his whole person this

metaphysical process by which the world of phenomenal things arises out of the depth of the eternal stillness and quietude.

Master Chü Chih could perform such a feat because the finger he raised was the no-finger, that is, *śūnyatā* itself. The disciple who imitated his Master also raised one finger. Outwardly the boy did exactly the same thing as the Master. But the finger which he stuck up was no more than a "finger," for while raising it, he was conscious that he was raising his "finger." Since the boy lived exclusively in the secondary dimension of Reality, the finger he raised was an essentially limited phenomenal object. The finger as a phenomenal object was raised, but the universe did not arise with it.

When, his finger having been cut off and he himself having been called to by the Master, he turned round and wanted to raise his finger in answer to his Master's question: "What is the Buddha?" he noticed that the finger did not rise. At that very precise instant he realized like a flash the non-existence of his finger in the most profound sense. That is to say, instead of a phenomenal finger he saw there the no-finger. He could not raise his phenomenal finger, but he could raise the non-phenomenal, invisible and non-existent finger. By raising this no-finger, he raised the whole universe. At that moment he saw the whole universe arising out of an invisible dimension of Reality. Thus the boy attained enlightenment. The no-finger which he raised there and then was exactly of the same nature as the "three pounds of flax" of Master Tung Shan and the "oak tree in the courtyard" of Master Chao Chou.

Silent, wordless gesture is not the only means by which the primary level of Reality becomes actualized. Recourse is often had to language, full-fledged speech, in order to actualize here and now the eternal Truth. Thus, to give a typical example:

> Once a monk asked Master Fêng Hsüeh (J.: Fūketsu, 896-973) saying: "Speech spoils the transcendence (of Reality), while silence spoils the manifestation. How could one combine speech and silence without spoiling Reality?"
> The Master replied: "I always remember the spring scenery I saw once

> in Chiang Nan. Partridges were chirping there among fragrant flowers in full bloom!"[14]

The monk says, if we use words in order to describe the primary level of Reality, its original inarticulate Oneness gets inevitably articulated into limited entities. If, on the other hand, we keep silent, everything becomes submerged into the eternal Nothingness and the phenomenal aspect of Reality is thereby lost. Hence the question: How could we combine speech and silence so that we might present the absolute Reality in both of its aspects?

Instead of answering by telling the monk *how* one could combine speech and silence. Master Fêng Hsüeh directly presents to the monk's eyes the primary level of Reality as a combination of silence and speech. In order to clarify the structure of his presentation, we must keep in mind that the exquisite spring scenery here described in words is a landscape evoked out of the depth of memory. It is a landscape that lies both temporally and spatially far away from the actual point at which the poet stands. It is, in other words, non-existent. Yet as being actually evoked in memory, the landscape is there, vividly alive. The chirpings of the partridges are not being heard at the present spacio-temporal point of the external reality. But in a different dimension the partridges are undeniably chirping among fragrant flowers. All the elements of the poem, including the subject-I, are in this way both absent and present at one and the same time. It is a peculiar combination of silence and speech.

From the semantic point of view we must remark that the articulating function of language is no less at work here than in the normal cases of language use. Since words are actually uttered, a number of definite semantic entities are produced — "I," "partridge," "chirping," "flower," "fragrance." But all these things, being in reality non-existent, do not present themselves as solid self-subsistent entities. They are transparent and permeable. Reflecting each other,

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[14] *Wu Mên Kuan*, No. XXIV. Fêng Hsüeh's answer is a quotation from Tu Fu (J.: Toho, 712–770), one of the most outstanding poets of the T'ang dynasty.

interpenetrating each other, and dissolving themselves into each other, they form an integral whole which is nothing other than the direct appearance of the primary level of Reality. In this sense, the semantic function of articulation is in such a context reduced almost to nullity. For articulation loses its functional basis, it does not work properly, in the presence of the trans-subjective, and trans-objective awareness of the interfusion of all things, where, for example, the word "partridge," instead of establishing an independent external substance, means rather its identification with the "flower" and all other things, so that they all end up by being fused into one. The majority of authentic Zen sayings are ultimately of this nature.[15]

To illustrate this point, I shall give here an example which is far more typically Zen than the preceding one. It is the *kōan* No. IV of the *Wu Mên Kuan*, entitled "The Barbarian Has No Beard." The word "barbarian" or "the barbarian of the West" refers to Bodhidharma who, having come from the West, i.e., India, allegedly started the movement of Zen Buddhism in China. This strange appellation for the venerated first Patriarch of Zen is purposely used in order to shock the common people out of their belief that Bodhidharma was an extraordinary, sacred or divine person. It is intended to suggest that he was just an ordinary man like anybody else. The *kōan* itself consists in an extremely short interrogatory sentence which is attributed to Master Huo An (J.: Waku-an, 1108-1179). It reads:

> That Western barbarian — why has he no beard?

An excellent example of Zen nonsense, one might say. Why and with what intention did Master Huo An ask such a nonsensical question? The very picture of Bodhidharma without beard goes against the prevalent image of this grave and stern Master of meditation. In fact in the traditional Chinese and Japanese drawings we find him almost invariably appearing with a dark shaggy beard.

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[15]Cf. Chang Chung-yuan: *Creativity and Taoism*, the Julian Press, New York, 1963, pp. 20-21.

In the verbal picture by Huo An, however, Bodhidharma is presented beardless, for in truth he appears here as an immediate actualization of the primary level of Reality. It is highly interesting to observe that Reality is presented as a combination of silence and speech just as it was in the spring scenery of Master Fêng Hsüeh, but in an incomparably more concise and straightforward way. The aspect of silence is represented in this verbal picuture by the beardless Bodhidharma. There is not even a single hair visible on his face. It refers to the aspect of Nothingness of Reality, the *śūnyatā*, which is absolutely inarticulate, "limitlessly open" with no distinction whatsoever. The aspect of speech is represented by his being "beard-less." The word "beard" is actually used. The word, as soon as it is uttered, inevitably produces a semantic entity by its intrinsic faculty of articulation. Something becomes articulated into an entity, the object-"beard." But it is immediately negated — "beard-less."

The combination of these two aspects verbally presents the primary level of Reality in its two essential forms. The absolute Nothingness discloses itself in a flash in the form of a beard, then it disappears into its original darkness. The semantic articulation is made, but it is immediately nullified. It is as though no articulation were ever made. Master Huo An is demanding his students to grasp instantaneously, at this precise fleeting moment, the structure of the integral whole of Reality.

This, however, is by no means an easy task to accomplish. For the effect of articulation is persistent. Once the "beard" is articulated out of Nothingness, it tends to remain as a semantic entity, even if the word is immediately negated. For the "beard" continues to subsist in a negative form. The "beard-less" is posited as a negative entity. The negation then comes to stand on a par with affirmation on the same level of discourse, and the original Negation, i.e., the *śūnyatā* is forever lost. Master Wu Mên referring to this danger says in his poem on this *kōan*:

Do not talk about your dream

In the presence of fools.
The barbarian has no beard, you say.
You simply add obscurity to what is clear in itself.

By trying to show the primary level of Reality in the twinkling of an eye in the form of "no-beard," Huo An simply leads ordinary men into an unnecessary intellectual entanglement, for it is so difficult for ordinary men to obliterate and nullify the effect of articulation immediately after it has occurred. But unless such a nullification of the articulated entity be effected, one can never hope to jump into an entirely different dimension of Reality and grasp the *śūnyatā* that has just manifested itself momentarily in the form of a "beard" which is in reality a "no-beard."

In India a philosopher of the Middle-Path school of the sixth century, Candrakīrti, has admirably elucidated this point through a metaphor in his *Prasannapadā* (XVIII).[16]

Suppose, so he says, a man afflicted with an eye disease sees flickering before his eyes a hair floating in the air. A trustworthy friend of his assures him that the hair which he is perceiving now is unreal. The man then may believe that the hair which is actually visible to him is not really existent. But he has not yet grasped the truth that there is absolutely no hair there, because he *is* actually perceiving the hair. It is only when he gets completely cured of his eye disease that he understands the non-existence of the hair — this time by not perceiving it at all. As the hallucination disappears his consciousness goes beyond the stage at which the question is raised as to whether the hair exists or not exists. As there is no longer any hallucination, the question itself of the existence or non-existence of the hair loses its meaning. The problem simply does not exist. Affirmation and negation are equally invalidated. This is the state of real Negation in the sense that it is beyond both affirmation and negation which are valid only at the stage of hallucination. The Nothingness or *śūnyatā* which

[16] *Prasannapadā* is a celebrated commentary by Candrakīrti on the *Madhyamakakārikā* "The Theory of the Middle Path" by Nāgārjuna.

is taught in Mahāyāna Buddhism — Candrakīrti thus concludes — is of such a structure.

To this we may add that the "no-beard" of Master Huo An is also exactly of this nature. It is comparable with the falsely perceived hair in the air at the very moment when the hallucination disappears — the "hair" which is "no-hair." The positing of the beard on the smooth face of Bodhidharma through semantic articulation is, as Master Wu Mên rightly remarks, putting a spot of obscurity on the face of clarity. Yet Huo An had to do so, for otherwise the original universal "clarity" would not have been manifested. Only through the process of activating the linguistic function of articulation which then immediately turns into non-articulation, can a passing glimpse be afforded into the real structure of Reality.

But Zen Masters are not always so kind to their disciples as Master Huo An. In the majority of cases, they simply show the aspect of articulation without then nullifying it. Thus Tung Shan just thrust the "three pounds of flax" before the visiting monk, and Chao Chou the "oak tree in the courtyard." It is left to the disciples themselves to turn the articulation into non-articulation.

Sometimes, again, the articulation is made by the visiting monk and the Master answers by presenting to him abruptly the non-articulation. This is best exemplified by the most celebrated of all Zen *kōans*, the *kōan* No.I of the *Wu Mên Kuan* which is entitled "Chao Chou's Dog," but which is better known as the "*Wu*-Word of Chao Chou." The word *wu* (J.: *mu*) simply means No!

> A monk once asked Master Chao Chou: "Has the dog the Buddha-nature?"
> The Master replied: "No!"

Innumerable commentaries have been written on this *kōan* concerning the word "No!" So many divergent opinions have been advanced. Particularly interesting is the way it was handled by Master Ta Hui (J.: Dai-e, 1089-1163) of the Lin Chi (J.: Rinzai) school. He established in this school the tradition of utilizing this particular *kōan*

as a most effective means by which to attain enlightenment. The tradition is still alive in Japan. There the word *wu!* or *mu!* is made to function almost magically, somewhat like the sound *aum* in Indian mysticism. The very sound of *wu!*, not its meaning, is thought to be psychologically effective in inducing the student's mind to go beyond the opposition of affirmation and negation in such a way that his subjectivity might be ultimately transformed into *Wu!* (Nothingness) itself.

Linguistically, however, it is far more simple to interpret Chao Chou's *wu!* as a direct presentation of the dimension of non-articulation which has just been explained. Chao Chou, in other words, nullifies on the spot the effect of the articulation made by the monk, by which the inarticulate Reality has been split into two entities, the dog and the Buddha-nature, and brings them back to the original Nothingness in which there is nothing to be distinguished as a dog or the Buddha-nature.

I shall bring this paper to an end by quoting another *kōan*[17] from the same *Wu Mên Kuan*, in which we see a perfect dramatization of the process by which articulation turns into non-articulation. The anecdote describes vividly how the monk Tê Shan (J.: Tokusan, ca. 782-865), who was to become later a famous Master, attained for the first time enlightenment.

> Once Tê Shan came to visit Master Lung T'an (J.: Ryūtan, ca. 850) asking for instruction, and stayed there till the night settled in.
> T'an said: "The night has advanced. Why don't you retire and repose?
> Shan made a deep bow, lifted the blind, and went out. But it was thick darkness outside. He came back and told the Master that it was utterly dark out there.
> T'an lit a candle and handed it to him. Shan was about to take it, when all of a sudden T'an blew the light out.
> On the spot, Shan attained enlightenment.

After what has been said in the preceding, this anecdote will need

[17]No. XXVIII.

no detailed elucidation. It is a silent drama. No words are used at the last critical moment. It goes without saying that the candle light which illumines the world of darkness and divides it up into visible things is here playing the role of language with its essential function of articulation. When the Master blew the light out, the once illumined world sank again into the original darkness where nothing could be distinguished. The articulation became nullified and turned into non-articulation. It is important to remark, however, that since Tê Shan had seen the illumined world (i.e., the articulated world) a moment ago, the darkness now was not sheer darkness; it was rather a darkness into which all the articulated things had been engulfed; it was non-existence as the plenitude of existence.

It will be but natural that words uttered in contexts of this kind should often look completely non-sensical to those who remain entangled in the meshes of semantic articulation.

THE ELIMINATION OF COLOR IN FAR EASTERN ART AND PHILOSOPHY

ERANOS 41
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I

The general theme of the Eranos lectures this year, "The Realms of Color," is, as it stands, an immense subject that can be channeled into almost an infinite number of directions in accordance with various possible angles from which one may choose to approach it. In order to deal with the theme in a consistent way, the vast field must first necessarily be delimited in some way or other so that the subject of discussion might properly be narrowed down to a concrete point or a number of relevant points closely interconnected with each other within the boundaries of some very particular and special problems.

In view of this fact, I have decided to set limits to the area in terms of two definite factors: firstly, the geographical division of the cultural traditions of the world (and I have chosen the Far East), and secondly, the positive and the negative attitude one could take toward the aesthetic value of color (and I have chosen the negative attitude). Hence the title of my lecture, "The Elimination of Color in Far Eastern Art and Philosophy."

The negative attitude toward color is in fact characteristic of the Far Eastern aesthetic experience, whether it be in the field of painting, poetry, drama, dancing or the art of tea. I shall discuss in the present paper some aspects of Oriental philosophy that will

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The theme of Eranos 41 (1972), that is, the 41st Eranos Conference Yearbook, which is the compilation of lectures given at the Eranos Conference in 1972, was "Die Welt der Farben — The Realms of Colour — Le monde des couleurs."

theoretically account for the remarkable natural inclination that is observable in Chinese and Japanese culture toward the subdual or suppression of color leading ultimately to a total elimination of colors except black and white. I shall try to clarify further that even "black" and "white" in such a situation cease to function as colors, and that they function rather as something of a totally different nature.

Many Westerners who have had some real aesthetic acquaintance with the Far East tend to represent its art in the form of black-and-white ink painting. The art of ink painting in China and Japan is in fact the best illustration of the negative attitude toward color which I have just referred to as being most characteristic of Far Eastern art. For in this monochromic world of artistic creation, the inexhaustible profusion and intricacy of the forms and colors of Nature is reduced to an extremely simplified and austere scheme of black outlines and a few discrete touches or washes of ink here and there, sometimes in glistening black, sometimes watered down to vaporous gray. In the background there may be a haziness of faint gray; more often than not the background is a blank, white space, i.e., bare silk or paper left untouched by the brush. There is consequently no titillation and gratification here of the sense of color.

What then is the real charm of the paintings of this sort? We know that it is not only the Orientals themselves that are attracted by the special "beauty" of the black-and-white. We know in fact that many an art connoisseur in the West has shown an enthusiastic appreciation of Far Eastern ink-painting. How are we to account for this fact? This is in brief the main problem which I should like to discuss in this paper. In so doing, however, I shall approach the problem not from the technical point of view of an art critic, which I am not. I shall rather try to bring to light the basic ideas that underlie the elimination of color. I shall deal with this latter problem as a problem of a peculiar type of aesthetic consciousness, as a peculiar spiritual phenomenon revealing one of the most fundamental aspects of Far Eastern culture.

Speaking of a peculiar type of Japanese poetry known as *haiku*,

which is said to be the most reticent form of poetic expression in the world, consisting as it does of only seventeen syllables arranged in three consecutive units of 5/7/5 syllables, R. H. Blyth once wrote: "*Haiku* is an ascetic art, an artistic asceticism."[1] The phrase "an artistic asceticism" not only characterizes *haiku;* as is clear, it applies equally well, or perhaps even better, to the art of black-and-white ink painting. It is important to remember, however, that this artistic asceticism, i.e., the suppression of externals and the reduction of all colors to black and white, manifests its real aesthetic function only against the background of a highly refined sensibility for colors and their subtle hues. In other words, the true profundity of the beauty of black-and-white is disclosed only to those eyes that are able to appreciate the splendors of sumptuous and glowing colors with all their delicate shades and tints. Otherwise, the ultimate result of the achromatization here in question would simply be utter absence of color in a purely negative sense, which would not be apt to excite any aesthetic emotion.

Due perhaps to the climatic conditions of the country and the colorful and picturesque appearance of its Nature, the Japanese had developed from time of high antiquity a remarkable sensibility for colors and hues which go on changing with the revolving seasons of the year.[2] In matters of color, as Y. Yashiro observes, Nature in Japan is comparable to a gorgeous brocade resplendent with infinitely varied colors. These colors of Japanese Nature, Yashiro goes on to say, are of a dazzling beauty; they are beautiful enough to intoxicate our aesthetic sense. Yet, on the other hand, the brilliancy of the colors is characteristically counterbalanced by what we might designate as a

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[1] R. H. Blyth: *History of Haiku*, vol. I, Tokyo, 1963. R. H. Blyth, known as the author of a number of works on Zen Buddhism, *haiku*, and some other aspects of Japanese culture, had a good understanding of the spiritual tradition of Japan. He died in 1964.

[2] See Yukio Yashiro: *Nihon Bijutsu-no Tokushitsu* ("The Characteristic Features of Japanese Art"), Tokyo, 4th ed. 1954, p. 235.

chromatic "reticence," a kind of natural restraint, quiet soberness (popularly known in the West as *shibui*), spreading like thin mists over the colors, matting their naked flamboyance and subduing their unrestrained external gorgeousness. These characteristics of Nature in Japan are said to have positively contributed toward the formation of the typical, aesthetic sensitiveness of the Japanese to color and its delicate nuances.[3]

However this may be, the fact that the Japanese in olden times were endowed with a very peculiar color sensibility is shown by a number of concrete, historical evidences. I shall give here two remarkable examples. The first one is taken from the aesthetic culture of the Heian Period (794-1185).

The Heian Period (meaning literally a period of Peace and Tranquility) in which the Fujiwara family stood at a splendid pinnacle of prosperity and domination around the imperial court in Kyoto, was the first peak in the history of Japan with regard to the development of aesthetic sensibility. It is to be remarked that the unusually keen aesthetic sensibility of the Fujiwara courtiers centered around the beauty of color. They were extremely color-conscious. The Heian Period was literally a "colorful" period. And during the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, the heyday of Fujiwara culture, the aesthetic sensibility attained to an unprecedented degree of elaboration, elegance, and refinement. This is best observable in the use, choice and combination of colors for the robes worn by the court ladies.

Unfortunately no real specimens of those Heian robes survive, but the lack of material evidence is well compensated for by the innumerable references to the court robes and their color in contemporary literature as well as by the pictorial representation of the gentle scenes of court life in the narrative scrolls of later ages, notably in the picture scroll of the famous *Tale of Genji*. Costumes were in most cases described with meticulous care both verbally and pictorially because the garment a person wore was considered in the Heian

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

Period a most immediate expression of his or her personality. "The garment *was* the person; it was the direct symbol of his or her personality."[4] It is important for our purpose to note that this symbolic function of the garment was exercised almost exclusively by the aesthetic effects produced by colors and their combination.

The prose literature of this period — the romantic stories by court ladies, their diaries and essays — mention the names of different colors, the number of which amounts to more than one hundred and seventy.[5] It is no exaggeration to say that the prose literature of that period constitutes in itself a flowery field of colors.

All these colors used to be combined in various ways through the most elaborate and sophisticated combination of clothes and their linings, undergarments and upper garments, so that they might constitute layers of color harmonies. The matching of various colors was in fact an art of highest refinement to be displayed within the limits of the well-established and generally accepted code of aesthetic taste. When silk robes are laid one upon another, the lower colors are more or less faintly seen through the color above, which could result in the creation of an indescribably delicate new color. Thus to give a few concrete examples, the color called *kōbai*, "pink-plum" was in itself an independent color evocative of the pink color of the blooming plum blossoms. But what was called "pink-plum-layer" was a different color produced by two color layers, the outer layer being pink or white and the inside layer the dark red of sappanwood. Further, the "fragrant-pink-plum-layer" was still another color produced by an outer layer of deep "pink-plum" and an inside layer of very light "pink-plum." Or to give another example the *yamabuki*, "yellow-rose" was, as the appellation itself shows, bright yellow reminiscent of the natural color of the flower of a Japanese plant known by that

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[4]Yoshio Araki: *Genji Monogatari Shōchō Ron* ("Symbolism in the *Tale of Genji*") in the Journal *Kaishaku to Kanshō*, vol. 142, Tokyo, 1948.

[5]See Aki Ihara: *Heianchō Bungaku-no Shikisō* ("The Chromatic Aspects of Literature in the Heian Period"), 1967, Tokyo, p. 8.

name. But the *hana-yamabuki*, "flowery-yellow-rose," also called "evening yellow-rose," was a compound color formed by an outer layer of light dead-leaf-brown and an inside layer of bright yellow. And *yamabuki-nioi*, "yellow-rose-fragrance" was a standardized color layer to be used for the costume of court ladies, the uppermost layer being bright yellow having underneath a number of layers of increasingly light yellow and the final undergarment being deep blue.

More important still for the color-conscious women of the Heian Period, however, was the stratification of harmonious colors coming from the very make-up of their formal costume. The court ladies wore the so-called *jūni-hitoé* meaning "twelve-layer" garment. It consisted of an outer robe of gorgeous brocade and embroidery and twelve or even more silk undergarments of different colors and shades which were arranged in such a way that each robe was slightly smaller and shorter than the one below it, so that a beautiful color stratification might be visible at the neck and the outer edges of the sleeves.

Quite naturally the ladies themselves and the noblemen in the imperial court had as a rule an extremely sharp and severe critical eye for color harmonies. Even the slightest fault in the combination of colors could hardly escape their notice. In a passage of the Diary of Lady Murasaki, widely known as the authoress of the *Tale of Genji*, we find an observation made by herself, which is quite interesting in this respect. One day, so she writes, when all the court ladies in attendance on the Emperor had taken special care with their garments, a certain lady proceeded to the Imperial presence. Everybody without exception noticed that there was a fault in the color combination at the openings of her sleeves. It was not really a very serious error, Lady Murasaki adds, but the color of one of her undergarments was a shade too pale.[6]

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[6] *Murasaki-Shikibu Nikki* ("The Diary of Lady Murasaki"), Iwanami Series of Classical Japanese Literature, No. 14, Tokyo, 1961, pp. 507-508. This passage is more fully quoted in English by Ivan Morris: *The World of the Shining Prince — Court Life in Ancient Japan* (a Peregrine Book, Oxford, 1969), p. 206. This latter book gives a fine description of the general characteristics of Heian

I have gone into these details about the Heian costume in order to show in the first place the degree of elegant refinement reached by the Japanese of those days in the development of sensibility for chromatic colors and their aesthetic value. Enough has been said, I believe, to corroborate the statement that I have made earlier that the Heian Period was literally a "colorful" period in the cultural history of Japan. In terms of the distinction, also made earlier, between the positive and the negative attitude toward color, Heian culture may rightly be said to be characterized by the definitely positive attitude taken by the courtiers of that age. The observation of this fact will naturally be conducive to another observation which is of greater importance for our present purposes; namely, that the elimination of color, which is unanimously considered one of the distinguishing marks of Far Eastern aesthetics, is backed by a passionate love of the beauty of colors and hues.

We must also observe in this connection that even in the midst of this flamboyantly colorful world created by the aesthetic sense of the Heian aristocrats there is almost always perceivable a kind of soberness, quietude and stillness, coming either from the very quality of the colors chosen or from the peculiar ways they are combined one with the other — or perhaps from both — so that the colors in most cases appear delicately subdued and toned down.

In this sense we may say that in this early period a marked tendency toward the subdual of colors is already observable. But "black" itself was in the eyes of the Heian courtiers, a dull, gloomy, unpleasant, and ominous color. It reminded them of death, and, at best, of abandoning the pleasures of the world and entering the monkhood. The effect it was apt to produce was generally nothing but dark emotions like sadness, grief, melancholy. Not infrequently the black-dyed robe is described as something ugly, lowly and poor, or odious

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culture. On the textile arts and costume decoration in Japan, Helen B. Minnich's *Japanese Costume* (Rutland and Tokyo, 1963) is the best work available in English.

and abominable. Even in such a world, however, there were among people of the highest aesthetic sophistication some whose color taste was refined to such an extent that they could go against and beyond the common-sense standard of taste and find in black the deepest stratum of beauty as the ultimate consummation of all colors or as the direct expression of the sublimation and purification of all emotions realized by one who had penetrated the unfathomable depth of the sadness of human existence. In the *Tale of Genji* we sometimes are surprised to find the aesthetic eye of Lady Murasaki already turned toward the supreme beauty of a dark, colorless world far beyond the "colorful" frivolities of sensuous pleasures.[7]

The Japanese taste for the exuberance of glowing color and the splendors of sumptuous decoration reached its second peak in the Momoyama Period which lasted from 1573 to 1615. Lavish display of colors and designs had never been so boldly made before in the history of Japan. In contrast to the too delicate aesthetic refinement of the Heian court aristocracy verging on effeminacy, the Momoyama, a period of warriors, had its culture saturated with their robust and vigorous spirit. It was a culture of virile vitality. The aesthetic taste of the age, quite in keeping with this warrior spirit, and backed by the unprecedented material prosperity of the merchant class, found its most adequate expression in the magnificent structure of the castles and palaces and in the gorgeousness of their interior decoration. In fact the creative energies of this period were most lavishly spent on the construction of huge fortress-castles and palaces.

Nobunaga (1510-1551), the first military dictator of the period, erected his famous Azuchi castle. Hideyoshi (1536-1598) who succeeded him and who brought the splendor of the period to its apex, built among others his most sumptuous castle on Momoyama (meaning literally Peach Hill) in 1594, known as the Peach Hill Palace,

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[7]On the special aesthetic significance of black in the *Tale of Genji*, see Aki Ihara, (*op. cit.*; cf. Note 5), pp. 203-235, a chapter entitled *Sumizome-no Bi* ("The Beauty of the Black-Dyed Robe"); also p. 23.

from which the period itself derived its name.

Both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi had the celebrated artists of the age decorate the walls and sliding panels of their castles in the most magnificent manner. At the head of those colorists stood Eitoku Kanō (1543-1590), who was asked to undertake the grand-scale decoration of these castles. Eitoku Kanō, the founder of what is known as the Kanō school of Japanese painting, with his bold brushwork, large designs, and the decorative use of patterns of dazzlingly brilliant colors, truly represents the so-called Momoyama style. As the result of the assiduous work of Eitoku and his numerous disciples, the broad surface of the walls of the huge audience halls in the castles and the sliding panels were covered by abstract areas and decorative patterns of crimson, purple, lapis, emerald and blue on backgrounds of pure gold, amidst which stood out trees, birds and rocks painted with a certain amount of realistic detail — a flowery mosaic of rich colors. The halls were further glorified by folding screens representing various aspects of Nature, animate or inanimate, painted in a profusion of sumptuous colors glowing with hues of lapis lazuli, jade, vermilion, oyster-shell white, etc.

Thus the Momoyama Period is predominantly a "colorful" age, even more brilliantly colorful than the Heian Period, equally characterized by the positive attitude toward color, though in a very different way from the latter. And yet — and this is the most important point to note for the purposes of the present paper — just at the back of this gorgeous display of flaunting colors there was a totally different world of powerful black-and-white painting. We must remember that the Japanese by that time had already passed through the sober Kamakura Period (1192-1333) in which Zen Buddhism thrived emphasizing the importance of realizing the existence of a formless and colorless world of eternal Reality beyond the phenomenal forms and colors. After the end of the Kamakura Period and before the advent of the Momoyama Period the Japanese had also passed through the Muromachi Period (1392-1573) in which many a first-rate painter produced masterpieces of black-and-white painting in the spirit of

the austere restraint which is typical of Zen, and under the direct influence of the poetic ink-painting of the Sung Period in China. Most of these Muromachi paintings, done by Zen monk-painters, were of such a nature that they roused in the minds of the beholders an undefinable but irresistible longing for the colorless dimension of existence which these paintings so well visualized.

Thus there is nothing strange in the fact that in the grandiose castles of the Momoyama Period these were private chambers of the non-colorful style standing in sharp contrast to the lavishly ornate official halls and corridors. In fact most of the famous colorists of the age who usually painted in the gorgeous Momoyama style were also well-trained in monochrome painting, the most notable example being Tōhaku Hasegawa (1539-1610), originally of the Kanō school, who left masterpieces in both the colorful and the black-and-white painting and who ended up by founding a new school of his own.

Viewed in this light, the Momoyama Period may be said to have been an age marked by the taste for the display of color, which was backed by the taste for the elimination of color. Far more telling in this respect than the pictorial art is the very peculiar elaboration of the art of tea through the aesthetic genius of the tea-master Rikyū (1521-1591).

Under the passionate patronage of that very warrior-dictator, Hideyoshi, who, as we have just seen, liked so much the splendor of flaunting colors and gorgeous forms and who had his castle so luxuriously decorated, Rikyū the tea-master perfected a particular art of tea known as *wabi-cha*, literally the tea of *wabi*, or the art of tea based on, and saturated through and through with, the spiritual attitude called *wabi*. The tea of *wabi* was according to the author of the celebrated *Book of Tea*, "a cult founded on the adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence."[8] The tea of *wabi* brings us into the domain of the elimination of color.

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[8]Kakuzō Okakura: *The Book of Tea* (Dover Publications, New York, 1964), p. 1. The book was originally written and published in 1906.

Wabi is one of the most fundamental aesthetic categories in Japan, and its taste casts its grayish shadow over many aspects of Japanese culture; for *wabi* is not a mere matter of aesthetic consciousness, but it is a peculiar way of living, an art of life as much as it is a principle of aestheticism.

Wabi is a concept difficult to define. But at least it is not impossible to have a glimpse of its structure by analyzing it into a limited number of basic constituent factors. For the sake of brevity I shall here reduce them to three and explain them one by one: (1) loneliness, (2) poverty, and (3) simplicity.

(1) The first factor, loneliness or solitude, living alone away from the dust and din of mundane life, must be understood in a spiritual or metaphysical sense. The idea of fugitiveness which is suggested by the word, if taken in terms of ordinary human life, would simply mean being-unsociable, which is exactly the contrary of what is aimed at by the art of tea. For the art of tea is intended to be enjoyed by a group of men temporarily gathered together for the particular purpose of drinking tea together. The "loneliness" in this context must rather be taken in the sense so admirably illustrated by the Zen master Sengai (1750-1873) in his *Song of Solitary Life*[9] which reads:

> I come alone,
> I die alone;
> In between times
> I'm just alone day and night. (In classical Chinese)
>
> This I who comes to this world alone
> And passes away from this world alone —
> It's the same I who lives in this humble hut all alone. (In Japanese)

The meaning of "being alone" is explained by Sengai himself in another place as follows: "What I call alone/Is to forget both alone and not-alone,/And again to forget the one who forgets:/This is

[9]Daisetz T. Suzuki: *Sengai, The Zen Master*, ed. by Eva Van Hoboken (Faber & Faber, London, 1971), pp. 23-24.

truly to be alone."

(2) The second factor, poverty, "being poor," must also be taken in a special sense. It means primarily living in the absolute absence of all ornate materials, one's existing in a vacant space far removed from the luxury of rich furniture. Physically it *is* a life of poverty. But this material poverty must be an immediate and natural expression of poverty in a spiritual sense. It must be material poverty sublimated into a metaphysical awareness of the eternal Void. Otherwise poverty would simply be sheer indigence and destitution having nothing to do with aesthetic experience.

(3) The third factor, simplicity, is most closely connected with the two preceding factors. The tea-room of the so-called Rikyū style, originally designed by this tea-master for the purpose of creating the art of *wabi*, is outwardly nothing but a mere cottage too small to accommodate more than five persons, or even less. The interior is of striking simplicity and chasteness to the extent of appearing often barren and desolate. No gaudy tone, no obtrusive object is allowed to be there. In fact the tea-room is almost absolutely empty except for a very small number of tea-utensils each of which is of refined simplicity. Quietude reigns in the tea-room, nothing breaking the silence save the sound of the boiling water in the iron kettle — the sound which to the Japanese ear is like the soughing of pine-trees on a distant mountain.

From the point of view of color, the essential simplicity of the tea-room may best be described as the state of colorlessness. The tea-room is not exactly or literally colorless for everything in this world does have color. To be more exact, we had better in this context make use of the commonly used Japanese phrase; "the killing of colors," that is, to make all colors subdued and unobtrusive to the limit of possibility. It is but natural that the extreme subdual or "killing" of colors should ultimately lead to a state verging on monochrome and sheer black-and-white. The monochrome is here a visual presentation of the total absence of color. But we should not forget that the absence of color is the result of the "killing" of color. That is to say,

under the total absence of color there is a vague reminiscence of all the colors that have been "killed." In this sense, the absence of color is the negative presence of color. It is also is this sense that the external absence of color assumes a positive aesthetic value as the internal presence of color. Thus there is something fundamentally paradoxical in the aesthetic appreciation of colorlessness or black-and-white, and that not only in the art of tea but also in Far Eastern art in general.

Nothing illustrates this paradoxical relation between the absence and the presence of color better than a celebrated *waka*-poem by Lord Teika of the Fujiwara family[10] (1162-1241), which is constantly quoted by the tea-men as their motto. The poem reads:

> All around, no flowers in bloom are seen,
> Nor blazing maple leaves I see,
> Only a solitary fisherman's hut I see,
> On the sea beach, in the twilight of this autumn eve.

The tea master Jō-ō (1503-1553), who initiated Rikyū into the *wabi* type of tea, is said to have been the first to recognize in this poem a visualization of the very spirit of the *wabi*-taste. It is to be remarked that the poet does not simply state that there is nothing perceivable. He says, instead, "no flowers in bloom are seen, nor blazing maple leaves I see." That is to say, brilliant colors are first positively presented to our mental vision to be immediately negated and eliminated. What takes place here is in reality not even an act of negating colors. For the negation of colorful words in this context represents a metaphysical process by which the beautiful colors are all brought back to the more fundamental color, that is, the color which is not a color. And the Nature is poetically represented in the dimension of the colorless color which is symbolized by a fisherman's hut standing all alone on the beach in the twilight grey of the autumn

[10]Fujiwara Teika, son of Fujiwara Shunzei, was a *waka*-poet of the highest rank in the early Kamakura Period. His work represents the very spirit and style of the "*Shin-Kokin*" *Anthology*. The poem here discussed is found in this Anthology.

evening. Thus the desolate wilderness of the late autumn depicted in this poem does not constitute a picture in monochrome understood in a superficial sense. It is, on the contrary, a sensuous presentation of the spirit of *wabi* as understood as an art of "killing" colors in order to bring them up to the dimension of the absolute Emptiness.

That the above is not an arbitrary interpretation of the poem on my part is testified by a famous passage in the *Nambō Records*,[11] a book in which a monk called Nambō Sōkei, who was one of the leading disciples of Rikyū, gives us a fairly systematic exposition of the principles of the *wabi*-taste tea as he learnt it from his teacher. In the passage in question, quoting the *waka*-poem which we have just read, Nambō notes that, according to what Rikyū has told him:

> Jō-ō used to remark that the spirit of the *wabi*-taste tea is exactly expressed by Lord Teika in this poem.
> The splendor of colorful flowers and tinted maple leaves (mentioned in this poem) are comparable to the gorgeousness of the formal, drawing-room tea. But as we contemplate quietly and intently the brilliant beauty of the flowers in bloom and tinted maple leaves, they all are found ultimately to be reduced to the spiritual dimension of absolute Emptiness which is indicated by the "solitary fisherman's hut on the sea beach." Those who have not previously tasted to the full the beauty of flowers and tinted leaves will never be able to live in contentment in a desolate place like a fisherman's hut. It is only after having contemplated flowers and tinted leaves year after year that one comes to realize that "living in a fisherman's hut" is the sublime culmination of the spiritual Loneliness.

The paradoxical relation between the absence and the presence of color is equally well exemplified in a somewhat different form in a different field, in the Nō Drama, a typical Japanese art that flourished

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[11]The authenticity of *Nambō Roku* has very much been discussed. But the importance of the book as a theoretic treatise on the *wabi* art of tea remains the same, whether it be a real work of Nambō or not. The passage is quoted from *Kinsei Geidō Ron*, Iwanami Series of Japanese Thought, No. 41, Tokyo, 1972, p. 18.

in the Muromachi Period lying between the Kamakura and the Momoyama Periods. The Nō costumes were and still are of the most gorgeous kind, made usually of colorful brocades with glittering gold, shimmering silver, and brilliant colors. In terms of color, the Nō drama is undeniably a world of chromatic exuberance. Under the surface of this polychromic splendor, however, the vision of a genius like Ze-ami (1363-1443), the real founder of Nō as an art, was directed toward the world of black-and-white. For him the flower of Nō drama and dancing was to bloom in its full in a dimension of spiritual depth where all these colors would be reduced to a monochromic simplicity.[12] For the ultimate goal of expression in the Nō drama is again the world of eternal Emptiness. In the metaphysical vision of Ze-ami, the last stage of training to be reached by the Nō actor after having gone through all the stages of strenuous spiritual discipline was the stage of what he calls "coolness" where the actor would be beyond and above all flowery colors, a world of Emptiness into which all phenomenal forms of Being have been dissolved.

The fantastic gorgeousness of color in Nō costumes is also counterbalanced and effaced by the austere restraint shown in the bodily movement of the actor. The sobering effect of the extreme restraint in the expression of emotion, which is not lost sight of even for a moment, is such that all colors lose their nakedly sensuous nature and turn into exquisite tone of subdued richness — subdued to the utmost limit of reticent expression. On the Nō stage movement represents stillness, and the stillness is not mere immobility in a negative sense. For in the peculiar atmosphere of spiritual tension, silence speaks an interior language which is far more eloquent than verbal expression, and non-movement is an interior movement which is far more forceful than any external movement. Thus beyond the external brilliancy of color which the Nō drama actually displays on the stage, the unfathomable depth of the eternal Colorlessness is evoked

[12]See Shōzō Masuda: *Nō-no Hyōgen* ("Expression in Nō"), Chūōkōron Books No. 260, Tokyo, 1971, pp. 27-28.

before the eyes of the spectator.

What, then, is this Colorlessness? And why Colorlessness rather than Colorfulness? In the second part of my lecture I shall try to answer this question by explaining the inner structure of the world of black-and-white.

II

I have in the preceding tried to explain through some conspicuous examples culled from the cultural history of Japan that the black-and-white or colorlessness in the aesthetic consciousness of the Far East is not a mere absence of chromatic colors; that, on the contrary, it is directly backed by an extremely refined sensibility for the splendor of colors; and that the colorlessness must be rather understood as the consummation of the aesthetic value of all colors.

I shall now turn to the problem of the inner structure of black-and-white and the particular philosophy of beauty underlying the monochromic forms of art that have developed in China and Japan.

I shall begin by quoting a remarkable statement made by Yün Nan T'ien (1633–1690), a well-known Chinese painter of the 17th century, i.e., the Ch'ing Period, on the significance of extreme simplicity in painting.[13] He says:

> Modern painters apply their mind only to brush and ink, whereas the ancients paid attention to *the absence of brush and ink*. If one is able to realize how the ancients applied their mind to the absence of brush and ink, one is not far from reaching the divine quality of painting.

The "absence of brush and ink" may in a more theoretic form be formulated as the principle of non-expression. The principle stems from the awareness of the expressiveness of non-expression, that is to say, the expressive absence of expression. It applies to almost all forms

[13]The statement is in reality an inscription on a picture. I quote it from Osvald Sirén: *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (Schocken Books, New York, 1963), p. 199. The italics are mine.

of art that are considered most characteristic of far Eastern culture. In the case of the pictorial art the principle of non-expression is illustrated in a typical form by black-and-white ink drawings done by a few brush strokes or some light touches of ink on a white ground, the serenity of the white space being in many cases even more expressive than the exquisitely expressive lines and glistening ink.

Of course a drawing, as long as it remains a drawing, cannot entirely dispense with lines or touches of ink. The "absence of brush and ink" is in this sense nothing but an unattainable ideal for those painters who want to actualize the principle of expression through non-expression. However, one can at last come closer and closer to the absolute absence of expression in proportion to the ever increasing inner accumulation of spiritual energy. Hence the great achievements in the field of ink painting in the Sung and Yüan Periods in China and the Kamakura and Ashikaga Periods in Japan, when Zen Buddhism attained its highest ascendancy in the two countries. And hence also the development, in the tradition of this form of pictorial art, of the technique known as the "thrifty brush" and the "frugality of ink." These two phrases originate from the realization of the fact that, in order to express the unruffled serenity of the mind in its absolute purity and in order to depict the reality of things as they really are — in their natural Suchness, as Zen Buddhism calls it — the painter must eliminate from his drawing all non-essential elements by using as few brush strokes as possible and by sparing the use of ink to the utmost limit of possibility.

As the result of the stringent application of this principle, many artists painted in soft ink watered down to an almost imperceptible vapor of grey. The outstanding painter in the Sung Period, Li Ch'êng, for instance, is said to have "spared ink as if it were gold." Lao Jung of the Yüan Period is said to have "spared ink as if it were his own life." The kind of ink painting represented by these masters is traditionally known as "mysteriously hazy painting" (*wei mang hua*). According to the testimony of his contemporaries, Lao Jung used to paint in such a way that the whole space was veiled in a dim haze; one felt as if

something were there, but nobody could tell what it was.

This is perfectly in keeping with the spirit of Taoism which, together with Zen, greatly influenced the development of ink painting. Lao Jung's work is no other than a pictorial presentation of the Way (*tao*) as described by Lao-tzŭ. In the *Tao Tê Ching* we read:

> Even if we try to see the Way, it cannot be seen. In this respect it may be described as "dim and figureless."
> Even if we try to hear it, it cannot be heard. In this respect it may be described as "inaudibly faint."
> Even if we try to grasp it, it cannot be touched. In this respect it may be described as "extremely minute."
> In these three aspects, the Way is unfathomable. And the three aspects are merged into one.[14] (That is no say, the Way can be represented only as a dim, hazy, and unfathomably deep One).
>
> The Way is utterly vague, utterly indistinct.
> Utterly indistinct, utterly vague, and yet there is in the midst of it (a faint and obscure) sign (of Something).
> Utterly vague, utterly indistinct, and yet there is Something there.[15]

If the "mysteriously hazy painting" of Lao Jung aims at a pictorial presentation of the Way, the Absolute, as Lao-tzŭ describes it here, the ink painting could theoretically be developed in two different directions: firstly toward depicting the absolute Nothing which the Way is in itself, and secondly toward depicting this absolute Nothing as it functions as the ultimate metaphysical ground of Being. The author of *Tao Tê Ching* himself describes the Way as a contradictory unity of Nothing and Something. Thus:

> Deep and bottomless, it is like the origin and ground of the ten thousand things....
> There is absolutely nothing, and yet there seems to be something.[16]

If the painter chooses the first direction, he will naturally end up

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[14] *Tao Tê Ching*, XIV.
[15] *Ibid.*, XL.
[16] *Ibid.*, IV.

by drawing the Nothing in its absolute nothingness, that is, actually not drawing anything at all. Then, a piece of white, blank paper or silk, untouched by the brush will have to be regarded as the highest masterpiece of pictorial art. It will be interesting to note that in fact there did appear some painters who put this principle into practice. As a result we have in the history of Japanese painting what is known as the "white-paper-inscription" (*haku-shi-san*) which consists in leaving the paper absolutely blank and only inscribing at the top some verses that are intended to interpret the picture which is supposed to be underneath. This curious type of "white painting" is said to have been inaugurated by a Japanese teaman in the Tokugawa Period, Yōken Fujimura.[17] But going to such extremes is inevitably conducive to the suicide of painting as painting. For, as long as one depends upon graphic means, one cannot, by *not* drawing anything, aesthetically evoke the vision of the Emptiness of a Lao-tzŭ or the Nothingness (*śūnyatā*) of Māhāyana Buddhism.

The only possible way to take for the painter appears thus to be the second one mentioned above; namely, to approach the absolute Nothing from the point of view of its being the ultimate metaphysical ground of the phenomenal world. The basic idea underlying this approach is suggested in the most concise form by the following two verses of the distinguished poet-painter of the Northern Sung Period, Su Tung P'o (J.: So Tōba, 1036-1101):

> Where there is nothing found, there is found everything,
> Flowers there are, the moon is there, and the belvedere.

The majority of those who paint in "water-and-ink" depict something positive in black ink on a white ground — a flower for example, a tree, a bird, etc., or often a whole landscape. In so doing, the painter sometimes seizes the precise metaphysical instant at which the figures of phenomenal things arise to his mind in the state of contemplation, emerging out of the depths of the formless and

[17] See Yukio Yashiro: *Nihon Bijutsu-no Tokushitsu* (*op. cit.*), pp. 143-144.

colorless ground of Being. It is in fact a spiritual event. A fine example of painting as a spiritual event of this kind is the celebrated landscape painting known as the *Haboku Sansui* (i.e., literally the Broken-Ink Mountain and Water) of Sesshū (1420-1506). Sesshū was an extra-ordinary Japanese Zen monk in the Muromachi Period, who was at the same time the most distinguished ink painter of the age. *Haboku* or "broken-ink" is a peculiar technique of ink painting which is more properly to be called the "splashed ink" technique.[18] Briefly explained it consists in that the painter first draws the main points of his motif in extremely pale watery ink, and then, before the ink gets dry, quickly and boldly flings over the wet surface vivid blots of black ink and draws a few lines of deep black.

Necessarily in this work of Sesshū nothing is depicted with a clear-cut outline. The whole landscape consists of indistinct forms, varying ink tones, vapors and the surrounding emptiness. In immense distances of the background, beyond veils of mist, craggy pillars of mountains loom against the sky, vague and obscure, like phantoms. In the foreground a rugged wall of a cliff with thick bushes (painted with a few brush strokes in rich and thick ink) is seen rising sheer from the river bank. Under the cliff a small house is discernible. On the water, which is finely suggested by the absence of ink, floats a solitary boat, perhaps a fisherman's boat. The remaining surface of the paper is left entirely bare. But the empty areas obviously play in this landscape a role at least as important as — if not more important than — the splashed blots of ink. For it is only amidst the surrounding cloudy space that the positive side of the picture (consisting of a few black strokes and splashes) turns into a metaphysical landscape crystallizing a fleeting glimpse of the world of phenomena as it arises out of a realm beyond the reach of the senses. It is, on the other hand, by dint of the figures actually depicted in black ink that the blank

[18]For more detail on this problem, see Ichimatsu Tanaka: *Japanese Ink Painting — Shūbun to Sesshū*, Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art, No. 12, New York and Tokyo, 1972, pp. 173–174.

space ceases to be bare silk or paper, transforms itself into an illimitable space, and begins to function in the picture as the formless and colorless depth of all phenomenal forms and colors.

As another excellent example of the use of a wide blank space of a similar nature we may refer to the equally celebrated ink painting attributed to the Chinese painter Mu Ch'i (J.: Mokkei) of the 13th century, "The Evening Bell from a Temple in the Mist." It is a rare masterpiece of ink painting. A wide, dim space — a suggestion of the Infinite — occupies the greater part of the paper. The depicted forms are reduced to a minimum: a small corner of the roof of a house, the faint silhouette of a temple in the aerial distance, the shadowy woods emerging and disappearing in the mist, the lower parts of the trees entirely lost in the twilight. In contrast to the dynamism of ink splashes in the Broken-Ink Landscape of Sesshū, the equally hazy landscape of Mu Ch'i is of a static nature. A profound cosmic quietude reigns over the landscape. One might say that the dynamism of Sesshū's painting depicts the very instant of the forceful emergence of the phenomenal world out of the eternal Emptiness, whereas Mu Ch'i depicts here the essential stillness of the phenomenal world reposing in the bosom of the all-enveloping Silence. But in either case, what is evoked by the blank space is the same Great Void which is the ultimate source of all things. The blank space, in other words, visualizes a metaphysical or spiritual space which is absolutely beyond time. It evokes a timeless space, the timeless dimension of things. And this is true even of the Broken-Ink Landscape of Sesshū in which, as I have just said, the "emergence" of the phenomenal world is depicted. For the emergence here in question is not a "temporal" emergence, but it is the metaphysical and a-temporal emergence of things in a spiritual Space which in Mahāyāna Buddhism is often referred to by the word Mind.

Not all ink paintings, however, are done in such a vaporous and diffused manner. Quite the contrary, the contours of the things are often very clearly delineated with expressive lines, now heavy and thick, now agile and light. But the fundamental relation between the

depicted figure and the empty background remains essentially the same. For the heightened impression of the positive presence of an object enhances, in its turn, the impression of the illimitability of the cosmic and metaphysical space which would engulf into its depths the phenomenal form that has emerged out of itself.

The peculiar relation which I have just mentioned between the heightened presence of an object depicted and the blank space enveloping it is most easily observable in paintings done in the "thrifty brush" style. Look at the famous "Mynah-Bird on a Pine-Tree" by Mu Ch'i, a monochrome picture of a solitary bird in deep black perched on the rugged trunk of an aged pine-tree which is drawn in extremely dry and astringent ink. The background is again a blank space which, by dint of the forceful presence of the black bird in the foreground, turns into the cosmic Loneliness of ultimate reality itself. And the piercing eye of the bird — which is the very center of the picture — seems to be penetrating into the deepest dimension of reality lying beyond the very existence of the bird itself.

This picture of the "Mynah-Bird on a Pine-Tree" will remind us of the oft-quoted *haiku*-poem of Bashō (1664–1694) who is in Japan popularly known as the peerless "*haiku*-saint." The poem reads:

> On a branch of a withered tree
> A raven is perched —
> This autumn eve.

This is indeed a verbal painting in black-and-white, the black figure of a solitary raven perching on a dead branch against the background of the illimitable Emptiness of an autumn eve. Here again we have an instance of a perfect visualization of the cosmic Loneliness out of which arise the lonely figures of the phenomenal world — not through brush and ink this time, but by the evocative power of words. The externalized forms of Being are essentially lonely, no matter how brilliantly colorful they might be as pure phenomena. This essential loneliness of phenomenal things is best visualized by black-and-white. This must be what was in the mind of the *haiku*-poet

Bashō when he characterized the basic attitude of verse-making peculiar to his own school in distinction from that of all other schools, by saying: "The *haiku* of the other schools are like colored paintings, whereas the works of my school must be like monochrome paintings. Not that in my school all works are invariably and always colorless. But (even when a verse depicts things beautifully colored) the underlying attitude is totally different from that of other schools. For the matter of primary concern in my school is the spiritual subdual of all external colors."

It will be only natural that *haiku* poetry whose basic spirit is such as has just been explained, should attach prime importance to the "absence of brush and ink," to use again Yün Nan T'ien's expression. In other words, *haiku* — at least that of the Bashō school — cannot subsist as a poetic art except on the basis of the clear awareness of the aesthetic value of empty space. For a *haiku* is a poetic expression of a fleeting glimpse into a trans-sensible dimension of Being through a momentary grasp of an illuminating aperture that the poet finds in a sensible phenomenon. The latter can be sketched by words, but the trans-sensible dimension, the Beyond, allows of being expressed only through what is not expressed. *Haiku* expresses these two dimensions of Being at one and the same time by positively depicting the phenomenal forms of Nature. Hence the supreme importance of the blank space which is to be created by nonexpression.

The artistic use of blank space is observable in almost all forms of art in the Far East. The technique of non-motion in the Nō drama to which reference has been made earlier is an apt example. Non-motion, or the absolute absence of bodily movement is nothing other than the empty space actualized on the stage by the actor through the cessation of motion. It is an instant of external blankness into which the entire spiritual energy of the actor has been concentrated. The technique of non-motion is considered the ultimate height to which the Nō dancing can attain. To express intense dramatic emotions through the exquisite movement of the body in dancing is still

comparatively easy. According to Ze-ami, only the perfectly accomplished actor after years and years of rigorous technical training and spiritual discipline, is able to actualize on the stage the most forceful expression of emotion by the extreme condensation of inner energy into a sublimated absence of action. The actor does not move his body. He remains absolutely still, as if crystallized into an image itself of Timelessness. In this extraordinary density of spiritual tension, without dancing he dances; he dances internally, with his mind. And against the background of this non-action, even the slightest movement of the body is as expressive as a tiny dot of black ink on the surface of white paper in ink painting.

Much more could be said on the significance of dramatic blank space in the theory of Nō as developed by Ze-ami and his followers. Still more could be said on the role played by blank space in various forms of Far Eastern art as well as in other more practical fields of human life in the Far East. For the purposes of the present paper, however, enough has already been said on this aspect of our problem. Let us now turn to the more positive side of the matter, namely the significance of the positively depicted forms as distinguished from the empty background.

Let us recall at this point that the spirit of Far Eastern art in its most typical form consists in expressing much by little; it is an art which aims at producing the maximum of aesthetic effect by the minimum of expression verging on non-expression. Thus in ink painting just a few brush strokes and the resulting summary lines and ink washes can evoke the weighty presence of a thing far more impressively than a minute, faithful reproduction of its color and the details of its external form. What is the secret of this type of art? The right answer to this question will be given by our elucidating the inner structure of the things as they are pictorially represented with the least possible number of lines and strokes, and with the elimination of all colors except black.

It will have been understood that monochrome ink painting in China and Japan is a peculiar art centering round the aesthetic

appreciation of the spiritual atmosphere which it evokes. In this art Nature and natural objects play a predominant part. In fact the most typical form of brush-and-ink work is landscape painting. And the pictorial representation of landscaped and various natural objects is done by means of lines and ink tones.

The word "landscape painting" in this context, however, needs a special comment. For the word "landscape" does not necessarily mean a whole landscape. It is to be remembered that there is no *nature morte* in the traditional conception of painting in the Far East.[19] The concept does not exist. Many pictures that would in the West normally be put into the category of *nature morte* are regarded in the East as landscape paintings. It is of little importance here whether a "landscape" painting represents a whole landscape or only a flower, grass, or fruit. What is actually drawn may be a single bamboo, for instance. It is in reality not a single bamboo. Before the eyes of the beholder, the single bamboo expands itself into a dense grove of bamboo, and still further into the vast expands of Nature itself. It is a landscape painting. Or, to give another example, a solitary autumn flower is seen quietly blooming on a white background. It is not a mere picture of a single flower, for the depicted flower conjures up the presence of Nature infinitely extending beyond it. And by so doing, the flower discloses to our inner eye the cosmic solitude and quietude of all solitary existents in the world. Even a fruit or vegetable can in this sense constitute the subject of a landscape painting. The most celebrated picture of "Six Persimmons" attributed to Mu Ch'i is a good example. In its extreme simplification of the form of persimmons drawn in varying tones of black ink, it is a pictorial representation of the vast cosmos. The underlying philosophy is Hua Yen metaphysics which sees in one thing, in every single thing, all other things contained. R. H. Blyth gives this philosophic view a brief but beautiful poetic expression when he says that each thing "is with all things, because ... when one thing is taken up,

[19]See Shōgo Kinbara: *Tōyō Bijutsu* ("Oriental Art"), Kawade, Tokyo, 1941, pp. 102–103.

all things are taken up with it. One flower is the spring, a falling leaf has the whole of autumn, of every autumn, of the timeless autumn of each thing and of all things."[20]

As we have noted earlier, monochrome painting depends exclusively on two factors: (1) line and (2) ink tone. By definition it eliminates all chromatic colors that go to make Nature flamboyant in the dimension of our sensory experience. Necessarily and inevitably Nature becomes transformed in a peculiar way when it is represented as a world consisting only of lines and ink tones.

In the tradition of Oriental ink painting, drawing a natural object in brush-lines is directly conducive to the spiritualization of Nature. The Oriental brush made of hard and soft bristles is of such a nature that it faithfully reflects the varying moods of the man who uses it and the various degrees of the depth of his mind. Furthermore, it must be remembered that in China and Japan the brush-stroke technique is most intimately related with the technique of drawing spiritualized lines that developed in the art of calligraphy — the most abstract of all Oriental arts, exclusively interested in an immediate expression of the depth of the spiritual awareness of the man. Thus in drawing pictures by brush-lines the painter is able to infuse the object he has chosen to depict with the inner energy of his own, just as he does in writing ideographic characters.

The brush-strokes can be sudden, rugged, and vehement. They can also be soft and supple, serene and quiet. The painter sometimes draws an object with a fluid sinuous line of an indescribable suavity and sweetness. Sometimes his lines are alert, quick and fiery; sometimes, again, slow and heavy. Each line has its own speed and weight. The weight of the line is determined by the amount of power with which the brush is pressed against the paper. The pressure of the brush, coupled with the speed of its movement, faithfully reflects the spiritual undulations of the painter.

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[20]Blyth: *Haiku*, vol. I, *Eastern Culture*, Hokuseidō, Tokyo, 5th ed., 1967, Preface p. 8.

As for the ink tones, another basic factor of monochrome painting, sufficient explanation has already been given in an earlier section of this paper concerning its spiritualizing function. Thus the Far Eastern art of ink painting is definitely a spiritual art.

It will readily be admitted that, as an essentially spiritual art, this kind of painting requires the utmost concentration of the mind. The concentration of the mind is required first of all by the peculiar nature of Oriental paper used for this art. Oriental paper is no less sensitive than the Oriental brush in the sense that it absorbs water and ink easily and quickly. Even the slightest drop of water, not to speak of ink, soaks instantaneously into it and leaves an indelible trace on its surface. Strictly speaking, "painting" is here impossible. Unlike Western oil painting, in which colors can be piled up in layers, an ink painting is a work that must be finished once and for all. Every stroke is the first and the last stroke. Absolutely no retouch is possible. If a line gets broken in its flow, for example, it is broken for ever; it cannot be continued, for the movement of the spirit has stopped as the line has stopped. There is thus no time for deliberation in the process, no room for subsequent corrections and alterations. As Chang Yen Yüan (9th century, the T'ang Period) remarks in his famous and important book on the fundamentals of Chinese painting "He who deliberates and moves the brush, intent upon making a picture, misses the art of painting, while he who cogitates and moves the brush without such intentions, reaches the art of painting. His hand will not get stiff; his heart will not grow cold; without knowing how, he accomplishes it."[21]

The intense concentration of the mind is demanded of the painter not only for the technical or practical reason coming from the nature of Oriental paper. It is required also for another important reason, the discussion of which will directly lead us toward the more philosophical aspect of our subject. As in Western painting, Oriental ink painting starts from, and is based upon, a close observation of the

[21]Quoted from Oswald Sirén, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

things of Nature. The observation, however, does not consist here in a strictly objective, scientific and methodical observation of Nature. The observation of things which is demanded in the typically Oriental type of painting is a complete penetration of the eye of the painter into the invisible reality of the things until the pulse-beat of his soul becomes identical with the pulse-beat of cosmic Life permeating all things, whether large or small, organic or inorganic. Such an observation of things is possible only by means of an intense concentration of all the inner forces of the soul — a state of the mind in which observation is identical with introspection, that is to say, in which the observation of the external world is at the same time the act of penetration into the interior of the mind itself.

In a passage of "Scattered Notes at a Rainy Window" (*Yü Ch'uang Man Pi*), which is considered the most important writing on Chinese aesthetics in the Ch'ing Period, the author, Wang Yüan Ch'i remarks:

> The idea must be conceived before the brush is grasped — such is the principal point in painting. When the painter takes up the brush he must be absolutely quiet, serene, peaceful and collected and shut out all vulgar emotions. He must sit down in silence before the white silk scroll, concentrate his soul and control his vital energy ... When he has a complete view in his mind, then he should dip the brush and lick the tip.[22]

It is important to observe in this connection that for the Far Eastern painter everything is inspirited; everything in this world has a spirit within itself. The painter concentrates first and foremost on penetrating into the "spirit" of the thing which he wants to paint. The "spirit" of a thing is the primordial origin of its phenomenal appearance, the innermost ground of its being, lying beyond its external color and form. It is this inscrutable spiritual force, the life-breath, the deepest essence of the thing, that is considered to make a painting a real piece of art, when the inspired painter has succeeded in transmitting it through brush and ink. Even a single stone must be painted in such a way that its pictorial reproduction reverberates with the

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 203.

pulsation of the life-spirit of the stone.

This innermost spirit of things is variously called in different fields of thought in China and Japan. In the classical theories of painting it is called the "bone-structure." The "bone-structure" of stone, for example, is the depth-form which the stone assumes in the primordial stratum of its existence. It is the most fundamental form of the stone which the painter must discover by years of close observation-introspection through the painstaking process of elimination of all subordinate elements and external factors one after another until he reaches the utmost limit of simplification at which alone is the "spirit" of the stone revealed to his mind in a flash of illumination.

In the theory of *haiku*-poetry, the "spirit" here in question is called *hon-jō*, the "real nature" of a thing. Explicating a central idea taught by Bashō,[23] one of his representative disciples says:

> Our master used to admonish us to learn about the pine-tree from the pine-tree itself, and about the bamboo from the bamboo itself. He meant by these words that we should totally abandon the act of deliberation based on our ego. ...What the master meant by 'learning' is our penetrating into the object itself (whether it be a pine-tree or a bamboo) until its inscrutable essence (i.e., its *hon-jō*) is revealed to us. Then the poetic emotion thereby stimulated becomes crystallized into a verse. No matter how clearly we might depict an object in a verse, the object and our ego would remain two separated things and the poetic emotion expressed would never reach the true reality of the object, if the emotion is not a spontaneous effusion out of the (*hon-jō*) of that very object. Such (discrepancy between the emotion and reality) is caused by the deliberate intention on the part of our ego.[24]

Likewise, in the same book:

> Concerning the right way of making *haiku*, I have heard our master say: As the light (of the deep reality) of a thing flashes upon your sight, you

[23]Dohō Hattori (1657–1730), author of the *San Zōshi* ("Three Notebooks") in which he noted down Bashō's remarks on *haiku* and its spirit.

[24]*Aka Zōshi* ("Red Book," one of the "Three Notebooks"), quoted from the Iwanami Series of Classical Japanese Literature Series, No. 66, Tokyo, 2nd ed., 1972, pp. 398–399.

must on the instant fix it in a verse before the light fades out.
Another way of making *haiku* is what the master has described as "shaking out of the mind the instantaneous inspiration onto the exterior form of a verse."
This and all other similar ways taught by the master have this idea in common that one should go into the interior of the thing, into the spirit of the object, and immediately fix through words the real form of the thing before the emotion cools down.[25]

Thus, to come back to the art of ink painting, the most important point is that one should penetrate into the innermost reality of an object or a whole landscape, and seize the life-breath which is animating it. But the penetration of the artist here spoken of into the spirit of a thing cannot be achieved as long as he retains his ego. This is the gist of what Bashō taught about the art of *haiku*-poetry. One can delve deeply into the spirit of a thing only by delving deeply into his own self. And delving deeply into one's own self is to lose one's own self, to become completely egoless, the subject getting entirely lost in the object. This spiritual process is often referred to in the East by the expression: "the man becomes the object." The painter who wants to paint a bamboo must first become the bamboo and let the bamboo draw its own inner form on the paper.

What I have referred to in the foregoing as the "inner form," "innermost reality," "bone-structure," "spirit" etc. of a thing corresponds to what is called *li* in Chinese philosophy. The term *li* played a role of tremendous importance in the history of Chinese philosophy, first in the formation of the Hua Yen metaphysics in Buddhism, and later in the philosophical world-view of Neo-Confucianism in the Sung Period. The philosophy of Chu-tzŭ (1139–1200), for example, may best be characterized as a philosophical system developed around the central concept of *li*.

For lack of time and space I cannot go into the discussion of this concept now. Suffice it here to say that for Chu-tzŭ the *li* is the

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 400–401.

eternal principle transcending time and space, immaterial, indestructible, and super-sensible. In itself the *li* is metaphysical ("above form," *hsin êrh shang*), but it inheres in everything physical ("below shape" *hsin êrh hsia*); i.e., every physical object in existence, whether animate or inanimate. That is to say, every sensible object that exists in this world has inherent in it a metaphysical principle governing from within all that is manifested by the object in the dimension of its physical existence. The *li* of a thing is, in short, the deepest metaphysical ground of the thing, which makes the thing what it really is — the "is-ness" or "such-ness" of the thing as the Buddhists would call it.

In a famous passage of his "Commentary on the Great Learning" (*Ta Hsüeh*), Chu-tzŭ emphasizes the supreme importance of our realizing the *li* of everything by means of what he calls the "investigation of things." He says:

> If we want to bring our knowledge to the utmost limit of perfection, we must take up all things and thoroughly investigate the *li* of each individual thing one after another. This is possible because, on one hand, the human mind is endowed with a penetrating power of cognition and because, on the other, there is nothing under Heaven that is not endowed with *li*. Our knowledge usually remains in the state of imperfection only because we do not penetrate into the depth of the *li* of the things.
> Thus the foremost instruction of the "Great Learning" consists in urging every student to go on deepening the cognition of the *li* of all things in the world, taking advantage of the knowledge of *li* which he has already acquired, until his cognition of the *li* reaches the limit of perfection. After years of assiduous and unremitting effort, the student may suddenly become enlightened in a moment of illumination. Then everything will become thoroughly transparent to him: the outside and inside of all things, the fine and coarse of every single object, will be grasped in their reality. At the same time the original perfection of the reality of his own mind and its magnificent activity will also become apparent to him.[26]

Thus according to Chu-tzŭ, the *li* exists in the interior of every individual man, but the same *li* exists also in each one of all physical

[26] "Commentary on the Great Learning," Chapter V.

objects under Heaven so that in the most profound dimension of existence man and Nature are one single reality, although in the physical dimension each thing is an independent entity separated from all the rest. Because of this structure of reality, man is able — at least theoretically — to return to the original unity of the internal *li* and the external *li*, through sustained effort in combining introspective meditation and a searching investigation into the *li* of each individual object in the world. The very moment at which this unity of the internal *li* and the external *li* is realized is for Chu-tzŭ the moment of supreme enlightenment corresponding to *satori* in Zen. A man who has achieved this is a "sage" in the Neo-Confucian sense.

Later, in the Ming Period, Wang Yang Ming (1472–1527), the celebrated philosopher of that time tried out this method of attaining sagehood advocated by Chu-tzŭ. The interesting incident is related by Wang Yang Ming himself in his *Ch'uan Hsi Lu*, "Record of the Transmission of Instructions." He and one of his friends decided one day to carry out Chu-tzŭ's teaching. As an easy and practical starting-point, the two friends agreed to try to grasp the *li* of a bamboo that happened to be there in the courtyard. They set to work at once. Day and night they concentrated their mind upon the bamboo, trying to penetrate into its inner spirit. The friend fell into a nervous breakdown in three days. Wang Yang Ming himself who held out longer than his friend could not continue the "investigation" of the *li* of the bamboo more than seven consecutive days. His body became completely worn out, his mental energy exhausted, and the bamboo had not yet disclosed its *li* to him. He gave up in utter despair, murmuring to himself: "Alas, we are not endowed with the capacity to become sages!"[27]

In fairness to this remarkable thinker I would add that Wang Yang Ming later achieved enlightenment by means of pure contemplation and meditation. But to go into this subject would lead us too far away from our present problem.

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[27]"Record of the Transmission of Instructions," Part III.

It is in any case clear that the failure suffered by Wang Yang Ming was due to his inability at this earlier stage of his life to "become the bamboo," to use again that peculiar expression. In the field of painting and poetry we know the existence of many artists who could accomplish this spiritual feat.

The remarkable painter-poet of the Sung Period, Su Tung P'o, to whom reference has earlier been made, had, for example, left a number of interesting accounts in both prose and poetry of his friend Wên Yü K'o (Wên T'ung, 1018–1079) who was widely acclaimed by his contemporaries as a rare genius in the art of painting bamboos. In a short poem which our poet composed and inscribed over a picture of bamboos by Wên Yü K'o, he says:

> When Yü K'o paints bamboos,
> He sees bamboos; not a man does he see.
> Nay, not only is he oblivious of other men;
> In ecstasy, oblivious of his own self,
> He himself is transformed into bamboos. Then,
> Inexhaustibly emerge out of this mind bamboos, eternally fresh and alive.[28]

In another place, a prose essay in which he describes the art and personality of Wên Yü K'o, he says:

> In order to paint a bamboo, the painter must start by actualizing the perfect form of the bamboo in his mind. Then taking up the brush, he concentrates his inner sight upon the bamboo in his mind. And as the image of what he really wishes to paint clearly emerges, he must, at that very instant, start moving the brush in pursuit of the image like a falcon swooping at a hare that has just jumped out of the bush. If the concentration relaxes even for a moment, the whole thing is gone. This is what Yü K'o taught me.[29]

The image of the bamboo which Yü K'o says the painter must follow in a fiery swiftness of execution is the essential form that

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[28]Translated from the text given in *So Tōba*, Shūei-sha Series of Classical Chinese Poetry, No. 17, Tokyo, 1964, pp. 249–250.

[29]Translated from the text given in *So Tōba Shū* ("Collected Writings of Su Tung P'o"), Chikuma Series of Chinese Civilization, No. 2, Tokyo, 1972, p. 131.

manifests itself in his concentrated mind out of the *li* of the bamboo. Quite significantly Su Tung P'o uses the word *li* as a key-term of his aesthetic theory. Everything in the world, he says, has in its invisible depth an "eternal principle" (*ch'ang li*).[30] A painting which is not based on the intuitive apprehension of the "eternal principle" of the object it depicts is not, for Su Tung P'o worthy to be considered a real work of art, no matter how minutely and faithfully the picture may transmit the likeness of the external shape and color of the thing.

It will have been understood that in this kind of pictorial art, the elimination of color is almost a necessity. Color-sensation is the most primitive form of our cognition of external things. In the eyes of the Far Eastern artist or philosopher color represents the surface of Nature. For one who wants to break through the veils of physical exteriority of things and concentrate his mind on the eternal *li* existing in their interior as well as in his own mind, the seduction of color is a serious hindrance in the way of his apprehension of the innermost nature of the things, and in the way of his realization of his original unity with all things in the most profound layer of spiritual life.

From this becomes also understandable the very special function of black in Oriental painting. In colored paintings, black functions ordinarily as the obstruction of chromatic colors. It indicates the end of all other colors, and consequently the end of the life-breath pervading Nature. In ink painting, on the contrary, black *is* life; it is the infinite possibility of expression and development. Black here is not sheer black. For in its negation of all colors, all colors are positively affirmed.

When a red object is actually painted red, the object becomes immovably fixed in that particular color. According to the typically Oriental way of thinking, however, red contains in itself all other colors; and precisely because it contains in itself the essential possibility of being actualized in any other color, is it here and now manifesting itself as red. Such a world, in which every single color is seen

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

to contain in itself all other colors so that each color appears as the point of convergence of all colors, such a world of infinite color possibilities can best be painted in black — at least, in the view of the Far Eastern painter.

In the latter part of my lecture, I have exclusively dealt with the problem of the positive aspect of ink painting, that is, the problem of the positive representation of natural objects in this kind of Oriental art. In bringing this paper to a final close, I would recall once again the importance of the negative aspect of "painting without painting anything," the aspect of expressing by non-expression what is not actually expressed.

Ike-no Taiga (1723–1776), a representative Japanese painter in the Edo Period, was once asked: "What do you find most difficult in painting?" "Drawing a white space where absolutely nothing is drawn — that is the most difficult thing to accomplish in painting," was the answer.

THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR IN ZEN BUDDHISM

ERANOS 42
(1973)

I

This year I have chosen as my topic the problem of the distinction and relation between the interior and exterior, or the internal and the external world. This problem has played an exceedingly important role in the formative process of Far Eastern spirituality. The idea has in fact greatly contributed toward the development, elaboration and refinement of many of the most characteristic aspects of Far Eastern culture in such various fields as religious thought, philosophy, painting calligraphy, architecture, gardening, swordsmanship, tea ceremony, etc., etc ...

I shall, by way of preliminaries, begin by giving a few conspicuous examples from the fields of painting and calligraphy before I go into the discussion of how the same distinction between the interior and exterior has been dealt with in Zen Buddhism.

One of the earliest and most important theoreticians of Chinese painting, Hsieh Ho of the 5th century, who in his *Ku Hua Pin Lu* ("An Appreciative Record of Ancient Paintings") established the famous "Six Principles" of painting, precisely raised the problem of the interaction between the interior and exterior under the title of "Spiritual Tone Pulsating with Life," *ch'i yün shêng tung*. This

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The theme of Eranos 42 (1973), that is, the 42nd Eranos Conference Yearbook, which is the compilation of lectures given at the Eranos Conference in 1973, was "Die Welt der Entsprechungen — Correspondences in Man and World — Le monde des correspondances."

principle — which is the first of the six — indicates that in any good painting there must be a perfect, harmonious correspondence realized between the inner rhythm of man and the life rhythm of the external Nature in such a way that, as a result, an undefinable spiritual tone pervades the whole space of the picture, vitalizing the latter in the most subtle way and imparting metaphysical significance to the objects depicted, whatever they might be. When a painter succeeds in actualizing this principle, his work will be filled with a peculiar kind of spiritual energy in rhythmic pulsation of life. It will be a work of the all-pervading rhythm of cosmic Life itself, in which the spirit of man will be in direct communion with the inner reality of Heaven and Earth.

The *ch'i yün* or "spiritual tone" is thus realizable only through an active participation of man in the work of painting with the whole of his spiritual vitality. It is not to be ascribed to the natural *ch'i yün* of the things depicted. Landscape paintings in black and white (that are usually given as examples of the actualization of this principle) could be very misleading in this respect. A distant mountain looming out of the mist, for instance, or a torrent pouring down a rocky valley under cloudy peaks, etc., might easily give us the impression that the *ch'i yün* of the painting is but a reflection or transposition of the *ch'i yün* that is there in the external world of Nature. The fact is, however, that even such homely objects as stones, grass, and vegetables — a cucumber, for example, or an eggplant — may pictorially be represented with no less *ch'i yün* than a grand-scale landscape with mountains and streams, if only the painter knows how to concentrate his spiritual evergy upon seeing into the nature of the thing he intends to paint, to harmonize his spirit, so to speak, with the spirit of the thing, and then to infuse it into his work through the power of his brush. If he succeeds in doing this, then, as a result, the spirit of the object will be rendered in such a way that it moves, alive, on the paper in perfect consonance with the pulsation of the inner spirit of the artist.

Let us now try to reconstruct the whole process with a view to

bringing to light the underlying dialectic of the interior and exterior. Let us suppose that a Far Eastern painter now intends to draw a black and white picture of a bamboo. He is not primarily interested in representing the likeness. For he is first and foremost concerned with penetrating into the inner reality of the bamboo and letting its very "spirit" flow out of his brush as if it were a natural effusion of the bamboo.

In the tradition of Far Eastern aesthetics, a complete self-identification of the painter with the "soul" of his motif, i.e., his becoming perfectly at one with the spiritual significance of his motif, is considered an absolutely necessary condition for any high achievement in this sort of painting.

Now in order to become thoroughly at one with the object he wants to depict, the painter must first achieve a complete detachment from the agitations of the mind which unavoidably disturb his spiritual tranquility. For only in the profound stillness of a concentrated mind can the artist penetrate into the mysterium of the all-pervading cosmic Life and harmonize his spirit with the working of Nature. Hence the importance attached to the practice of "quiet sitting" among Far Eastern painters as a pre-condition of producing good paintings. Mi Yu Jên, a famous landscape painter of the Sung dynasty, for example, says: "The (external) things do not touch or excite me when I sit down quietly, cross-legged like a monk, forgetting all the troubles and harmonizing myself with the vast blue emptiness."[1]

Now, to hark back to our example of a painter intending to draw a picture of a bamboo, the first thing he must do is try to realize through meditation a spiritual "state of non-agitation," a state of deep inner silence, thus setting his mind entirely free and untroubled.

Then, with such a "purified" mind, he meets the bamboo: he gazes at it intently, gazes beyond its material form into its interior: he throws his own self wholly into the living spirit of the bamboo until

[1]Quoted by Osvald Sirén in his *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*, Schocken Book, New York, 1936, p. 68.

he feels a mysterious resonance of the pulse-beat of the bamboo in himself as identified with his own pulse-beat. Now he has grasped the bamboo from the inside: or, to use a characteristic expression of Oriental aesthetics, he has "become the bamboo." Then, and then only, does he take up the brush and draw on the paper what he has thus grasped, without any conscious effort, without any reflection. What kind of work will it be? Let us try to analyze the result of such an activity in terms of the interior and exterior.

(1) To begin with, the bamboo that has been depicted in this manner is necessarily an immediate expression of the inner rhythm of his own spirit which has harmonized itself with the life-rhythm of the bamboo. It is a landscape of his spirit in the sense that it is a pictorial self-expression of his spiritual reality. In this sense the picture of the bamboo is an externalization of the internal.

(2) Since, however, what has been grasped at the outset by the painter through a kind of existential empathy is the inner reality of the bamboo (which is in itself a natural object, i.e., a thing of the external world), the picture may and must also be regarded as a self-expression of the external world through the artist's brush. Each brush-stroke makes itself felt as beating with, and being expressive of, the pulsation of the inner life of the bamboo. Nature externalizes its own "interior" through the artistic activity of the painter.

(3) Thus we observe here a double externalization of the internal: the painter externalizes his "interior," i.e., his mental state or spiritual reality, while Nature on its part externalizes through the brush of the painter its "interior," i.e., the inner rhythm of life which pervades the whole universe and which runs through Nature.

It is remarkable that what is thus analyzable into a process of double externalization takes place in reality as a single and unique act. That is to say, the very act of the artist expressing his interior is in itself nothing other than the act of Nature expressing its own interior. As a result we have what we have referred to above as *ch'i yün shêng tung* or the "Spiritual Tone Pulsating with Life."

In the Far Eastern art of calligraphy we can observe the process of the externalization of the internal in a much simpler and more straightforward way. It is no accident that throughout the history of Chinese culture, painting and calligraphy have always been closely connected. In fact the two arts have developed in China in a most intimate association with each other so much so that they have often been considered one art. For the Far Easterner calligraphy is the painting of the mind.

But calligraphy differs from painting in that the "objects" in the former are nothing but ideograms, i.e., signs or symbols that are abstract in nature and that are therefore in themselves and by themselves totally devoid of life-rhythm which characterizes the natural objects. They are, so to speak, cold and lifeless things. The lifeless, dead signs become alive and begin to beat with the pulsation of living beings only when they get imbued with the spiritual energy of a calligrapher. In other words, they become aesthetically expressive only through the creative activity of the brush in a master hand. The ideograms are awakened from the slumbering state of pure abstraction and spring into palpitating life through the infusion of the spirit of an artist into them. Then the ideograms are no longer abstract signs: they are external manifestations of the human mind.

In the process of this transformation we witness the same externalization of the internal which we observed in the typical pattern of Far Eastern painting, but which is observable in a far less ambiguous way than in the case of painting. This is mostly due to the fact that the strokes of which the Chinese characters are composed, are taken separately and by themselves, devoid of meaning. Each component stroke — vertical, horizontal, slanting, turning upward or downward, or a dot — does not mean anything except that a whole composed of them, that is, a character, does have a definite meaning.

The most remarkable thing about this, however, is that each of the strokes which, as a component element of a character, does not signify anything definite, suddenly transforms itself into something fully significant and expressive in the art of calligraphy. For, when

executed by a master calligrapher, each single stroke is an immediate self-expression of the artist's state of mind. There remains no brush-stroke without expressing something of his mind. The brush faithfully obeys and reflects every movement of the mind of the man who uses it. And every movement of the brush is a direct disclosure of the inner structure of his mind at every instant. It is not without reason that in the Far East calligraphy is considered the portrait of the mind or self-portrait of the calligrapher. And as such it has always been appreciated as a very special kind of spiritual art.

It is, however, of utmost importance for our purpose to remark that what is meant by the dictum: "Calligraphy is the painting of the mind" is not simply that the psychological details of the writer are disclosed as the brush moves on the surface of the paper. For it will be but natural that the lines and strokes executed by a man in a mood of melancholy should tend to become droopy and feeble. A man who happens to be happy and gay naturally writes characters filled with vigor and vitality. Lines drawn by a man whose mind is agitated or terrified are almost necessarily unstable and trembling. What is far more important from the viewpoint of Far Eastern calligraphy is that a work should be a self-expression of a high-minded person, that it should be an external manifestation of the inner states of a spiritually disciplined man. Calligraphy cannot be a spiritual art as the "painting of the mind" except when it is an immediate externalization of a highly disciplined "interior."

By this I am referring to the fact that in the traditional form of Far Eastern calligraphy there is what may most appropriately be called "calligraphic enlightenment." After years and years of strenuous effort and rigorous training — and that not only in the technique of using the brush but in purifying the mind and trying to attain a profound inner tranquility — there comes to the calligrapher a decisive moment at which he feels the whole of his spiritualized "interior" suddenly flowing out of himself through the tip of his brush as if it were something material, actualizing itself on the paper in the form of successive characters. In such a situation, *he* is utterly incapable of

doing anything; it is rather his "interior" that dictates as it wills the movement of the brush. Only after having once gone through such a "moment" of calligraphic enlightenment is the man a real calligrapher; up to that moment he has simply been a student, an apprentice, not a master, no matter how masterly and dexterous he might be in executing beautiful or forceful brush-strokes. And it is on such a level of spiritual discipline that calligraphy becomes a typical Far Eastern art as the "externalization of the internal."

In fact, in every work of Far Eastern calligraphy, executed by one who has once gone through such an experience, we invariably observe the spiritual state of the man directly and naturally expressing itself in external forms. This is most easily to be seen in Zen calligraphy. But in other branches of calligraphy too, the externalization of the internal is clearly observable, no matter how different the content of the "internal" may be in each case.

The most basic form of Japanese calligraphy, the *hiragana*-writing of *waka*-poetry, for example, has nothing to do with Zen. And the calligraphic beauty of Japanese script is markedly different from that of Chinese characters. In Japanese calligraphy the beauty is primarily formed by gracefully flowing lines. The slow, rhythmic and graceful flow of the lines is felt by the Japanese to be a direct external expression of the inner *poésie*; it is *poésie* itself, the inner *poésie* of the calligrapher manifesting itself in the form of the external *poésie* of flowing lines. The lines themselves are profoundly poetic; they *are* poetry. And in this sense, Japanese calligraphy is also a fine illustration of the externalization of the internal, because here too the "internal" is a strictly and rigorously disciplined one, albeit in quite a different way from the "internal" of Zen calligraphy.

I have now briefly dealt with the problem of the interior and exterior in connection with the two typical forms of Oriental art just in order to bring home the important role this distinction has played in the formation of spiritual culture in the Far East. With these preliminaries we may now turn to our specific subject: the distinction and relation between the interior and exterior in Zen Buddhism.

II

It would seem that the distinction between the interior and exterior is a kind of intrinsic geometry of the human mind. As Gaston Bachelard[2] once remarked, "the dialectics of outside and inside" belongs to the most elementary and primitive stratum of our mind. It is a deep-rooted habit of our thinking. In fact we find everywhere the opposition of the interior and exterior. "Inside the house" versus "outside the house," "inside the country" versus "outside the country," "inside the earth" versus "outside the earth," "inner (i.e., esoteric) meaning" versus "outer (i.e., exoteric) meaning," the ego or mind as our "inside" versus the external world or Nature as our "outside," the soul as our "inside" versus the body as our "outside," etc., etc. The everyday ontology reposing upon the contrasting geometrical images of the interior and exterior thus forms one of the most fundamental patterns of thinking, by which our daily behavior is largely determined. "It (i.e., the dialectics of inside and outside) has," so says Bachelard, "the sharpness of the dialectics of *yes* and *no*, which decides everything. Unless one is careful, it is made into a basis of images that govern all thoughts of positive and negative."[3]

Zen also often talks about the interior and exterior. In Zen teaching and training much use is made of the distinction between them, in the majority of cases the "interior" referring to the mind or consciousness and the "exterior" to the world of Nature against which the human ego stands as subject against object. Examples abound in Zen documents. Thus to give a few examples taken at random from the *Lin Chi Lu* "The Sayings and Doings of Master Lin Chi (J. Rinzai, *ob.* 867)":

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[2]Gaston Bachelard: *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, Chap. IX entitled "The Dialectics of Outside and Inside."
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 211.

> If you desire to be like the old masters, do not look outward. The light of purity which shines out of every thought you conceive is the *Dharmakāya* (i.e., ultimate Reality) within yourselves.
>
> I simply wish to see you stop wandering after external objects.
>
> Do not commit yourselves to a grave mistake by convulsively looking around your neighborhood and not within yourselves... Just look within yourselves.[4]

The extraordinary importance of this distinction in Zen Buddhism will be brought home by merely reflecting upon the fact that the practice of meditation (*dhyāna*) which is uncontestedly the very core and essence of Zen is usually understood to consist in stopping our mind from running after "outward" things and turning it "inward" upon its own "inner" reality.

And yet, strictly speaking from the Zen point of view, the problem of the interior and exterior is but a pseudo-problem, in no matter what form it may be raised, because, seen with the eyes of an enlightened man, the interior and exterior are not two regions to be distinguished from one another. The distinction has no reality: it is nothing but a thought-construct peculiar to the discriminating activity of the mind. For one who has seen with his spiritual eye what the Hua Yen metaphysics indicates as the unimpeded interpenetration of the noumenal and the phenomenal, and then, further, the interpenetration of the phenomenal things among themselves, it will be meaningless and even ridiculous to speak of the interior standing against the exterior.

The problem of the interior and exterior is thus a pseudo-problem because in raising this problem we establish, as it were, forcibly two independent domains, make them stand opposed to each other, and discuss the relation between them, while in reality there is no

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[4]The English translation is by Daisetz Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Third Series, Rider, London, 1970, p. 49, pp. 50–51, p. 51.

such distinction to be made. It is a pseudo-problem because it is a problem that has been raised where there is none, and because one discusses it as if it were a real problem. The whole matter is, to use a characteristic Zen expression, "causing unnecessary entanglements where in reality there is none."

It is to be remembered, however, that Zen utilizes many pseudo-problems — besides that of the interior and exterior — for specific purposes. A pseudo-problem could be used as an expedient, a means of teaching leading toward the dissipation of false thinking. Poison as an antidote for poison. The classical documents of Zen are in this sense filled with pseudo-problems.

In fact almost all the questions that are recorded in the famous *kōan* collections and other Zen records as having been addressed each by a disciple or a visiting monk to some accomplished master are pseudo-problems.

> "Has the dog the Buddha-nature?" (i.e., Is an animal like the dog possessed of an innate capability to be enlightened and become a Buddha?)
>
> "Who is Chao Chou?"[5] (a question addressed to Master Chao Chou himself.)
>
> "What is the significance of the First Patriarch of Zen coming all the way from India to China?" (i.e., What did Bodhidharma bring from India? What is the very essence of Buddhism?)
>
> "Who are you?" of "Who am I?"

From the standpoint of an accomplished master (like, for example, Chao Chou), questions of this sort are, simply meaningless: they are "unnecessary entanglements."

In actuality, however, these and similar pseudo-problems are intentionally and consciously utilized in Zen. And the way they are utilized is very characteristic of, and peculiar to, Zen. Let me first briefly explain this point.

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[5]Chao Chou (J.: Jōshū, 778–897), one of the greatest Zen masters of the T'ang dynasty. The anecdote is recorded in the *Pi Yen Lu* (J.: *Hekigan Roku*), Case No. IX.

In ordinary conversation or dialogue the man who asks a question expects from the beginning a reasonable answer from the man to whom he addresses himself, an answer that will be concordant with his question. This common pattern of question-answer in no way applies to Zen dialogue known as *mondō*.

In a Zen context, a question is presented not in order to be answered but to be rejected outright. He who asks: "Has the dog the Buddha-nature?" in expectation of a reasonable answer is a man who has absolutely no understanding of Zen. The monk who, having already attained some knowledge of Zen, asks his master: "Has the dog the Buddha-nature?" aims exclusively at witnessing with his own eyes, or with the whole of his body-mind, how the master shatters this very question. In the midst of an existential tension between man and man, the disciple observes how the master nullifies on the spot the pseudo-problem, and by observing it he tries to gain a glimpse of the spiritual state of his master and thereby to have a chance, if possible, to attain to the same state. Or, in case the monk who asks the question happens to be a man of enlightenment, he wants thereby to fathom the depth of the master's spiritual awareness.

In any case, such a pattern of question-answer structurally presupposes the existence of dimensional discrepancy between the master who answers (*A*) and the disciple who asks (*B*). In other words, it stands on the supposition that *A* and *B* stand in two different dimensions of spiritual awareness. *A* is not supposed to give an answer to *B*'s question, standing on the same level of awareness as *B*. A master who does so cannot be a real Zen master. The question is uttered on the level of *B*, while the answer to it is given on the level of *A* — this is the normal form of Zen *mondō*. Otherwise expressed, the answer given by *A* does not constitute an answer to *B*'s question in the ordinary sense. Rather, the real answer in an authentic Zen *mondō* is that which discloses and nullifies at the same time the spiritual discrepancy lying between *A* and *B*.

There is, thus, no knowing what will come out from *A* as an

answer to *B*'s question.

> A monk asked Yün Mên:[6] "Where do Buddhas come from?"
> (i.e., What is the ultimate truth of Buddhahood?)
> Yün Mên replied: "The East Mountain is flowing over the water!"

> A monk asked Chao Chou:[7] "What is the significance of the First Patriarch of Zen coming from India to China?" Chao Chou replied: "The cypress tree in the courtyard!"

The answer in each of these cases is apparently non-sensical enough to confuse and confound *B*. The answer is often given in the form of a sharp blow with a stick, a kick, a slap in the face, a shout, etc. But in no matter what form it may be given, verbal or non-verbal, the basic structure remains always the same: namely, by bringing to naught the discrepancy between *A* and *B*, a life-and-death attempt is made on the part of *A* to let *B* witness and, if possible, experience the spiritual dimension in which stands *A* himself.

Here is another example which is relevant to our main subject.

> A monk asked Chao Chou: "Who is Chao Chou?"
> The master replied: "East Gate, West Gate, South Gate, North Gate!"

This answer which in an ordinary context would naturally be a sheer nonsense, *is* in this particular context a real and excellent answer.[8]

There are cases in which the answer given by *A* looks as if it stood on the same level as the question of *B*. Then the whole situation is liable to become very misleading. Take for example the celebrated *Wu* (J.: *Mu*) of Chao Chou.

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[6] Yün Mên (J.: Ummon, 864–949), an outstanding Zen master in the T'ang dynasty, known particularly for his cryptic and enigmatic utterances.

[7] See above, Note (5). This question-answer which has become a very famous *kōan* (*Wu Mên Kuan* Case No. XXXVII) and widely known in the Zen world as the Cypress-tree of Chao Chou, is explained in detail in my "The Structure of Selfhood in Zen Buddhism," (*Eranos 38–1969*, p. 137). [Editor's note: See volume I, p. 124.]

[8] The meaning of this will be made clear at the end of this paper.

A monk once asked Chao Chou: "Has the dog the Buddha-nature?" to which the master replied: "No (*wu*)!" If we were to suppose that this answer was given at the level at which the monk uttered his question, then this "No!" would most naturally mean: "No, the dog has no Buddha-nature." And Chao Chou's intention would thereby utterly be missed. In reality his answer aims primarily at invalidating not only the pseudo-problem raised by the monk, but also the existential consciousness itself of the monk: it aims at nullifying at one blow the spiritual discrepancy between Chao Chou and the monk. And such is the most authentic form of answers given to all pseudo-problems in Zen contexts.

Zen does not consider the raising of pseudo-problems meaningless and useless. Quite the contrary. It is through the seemingly roundabout way of pseudo-problems being raised and, once raised, being violently nullified on the spot that the student is led to Zen experience in many cases. This process corresponds to what I have clarified from a metaphysical point of view in one of my earlier Eranos lectures ("Sense and Nonsense in Zen Buddhism").[9] There I have analyzed the process by which the absolutely inarticulate Nothingness becomes articulated into a sensibly concrete form, and then the latter is negated on the spot, i.e., at the very moment of articulation, the original Nothingness being thereby disclosed for just an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. What is at issue in the present passage has exactly the same structure. Here, too, a pseudo-problem is first presented by *B* in his spiritual dimension; then it is nullified by *A* on the spot, at the very moment it is presented, with a blow, verbal or otherwise, issuing from the spiritual dimension of *A*, in such a way that *A*'s inner state be disclosed, naked, to the eye of *B*.

As I have stated at the outset, the problem of the interior and exterior is also one of the typical pseudo-problems. Zen begins by making a clear-cut distinction between the interior and exterior,

[9] *Eranos* 39–1970. [Editor's note: See volume I, pp. 137–169.]

puts the two into a sharp contrast, and then all of a sudden shocks the beginners by making a categorical statement that in reality there is no such distinction.

In describing the experience of *satori* or Zen enlightenment, Zen masters often use the expression: "the interior and exterior becoming smoothed out into one whole sheet." Not infrequently is the state of awareness at the moment of *satori* described as a "state of an absolute, internal and external unity." Thus Master Wu Mên,[10] to give one typical example, in giving suggestions to the disciples as to how they should "pass the *kōan* of Chao Chou's 'No!'," makes the following remark:

> If you want to pass this barrier, transform the whole of your mind-and-body into one single ball of Doubt and concentrate upon the question: "What is this 'No'?" Concentrate upon this question day and night. ... Just continue concentrating upon this problem; you will soon begin to feel as if you had gulped a red-hot iron ball which, stuck into the throat, you can neither swallow down nor spit out. (While you are in such a desperate state) all unnecessary knowledge that you have acquired and all false forms of awareness will be washed away one after another. And as a fruit gradually ripening, your time will ripen, and by a natural process your interior and exterior will finally become smoothed out into one whole sheet.

Since, properly speaking, there has been from the very beginning no real distinction, the "interior and exterior being smoothed out into one whole sheet" is nothing but a false description of reality. There is, however, no denying that the expression contains some amount of truth when it is considered a description of what is actually experienced in the course of Zen training.

In fact, from the point of view of a man who has not yet attained

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[10]Wu Mên (J.: Mumon, 1183–1260), known as the compiler of the celebrated *kōan* collection *Wu Mên Kuan* (J.: *Mumon Kan*) or "The Gateless Gate." The words here quoted are found in his Commentary on Case No. I of the *Wu Mên Kuan* in which Chao Chou utters his "No!" as an answer to the question: "Has the dog the Buddha-nature?"

satori, his interior and exterior are obviously two different domains of experience. I see this table. The "I" which is the seeing subject is separated from the table which is the object seen. The one is the interior and the other is the exterior. The instantaneous process by which the distinction loses its reality so that the interior and exterior become transformed into an absolute metaphysical unity, is faithfully reproduced by this peculiar Zen expression: "The interior and exterior become smoothed out into one whole sheet."

Thus the problem of the distinction and relation between the interior and exterior, although it is admittedly a pseudo-problem, does possess in Zen Buddhism the possibility of being developed theoretically as a meaningful philosophical problem. In embarking upon this task, we cannot evidently start from the standpoint of a master who has fully attained enlightenment. For in his spiritual dimension there is no place for opening such a problem; the problem simply does not exist for such a man. It is therefore only as a problem for men of non-enlightenment who are on their way toward enlightenment that the problem of the interior and exterior acquires in Zen the right to be treated as an important problem, theoretical as well as practical. Yet, in dealing with this problem in this sense, a penetrating eye must be kept open, surveying the whole extent of the problem from its beginning till the end. And such an eye must necessarily be the eye of a man who has already attained enlightenment.

Our situation becomes in this way somewhat complicated. For in order to deal with the problem of the interior and exterior from the viewpoint of Zen, we have to start from the naive world-experience of an ordinary man for whom the external world is clearly distinguished from his mind as two separate entities, and, at the same time, we must remain aware of how the problem of the relation between the interior and exterior is ultimately to be resolved in the experience of enlightenment. This is the procedure we are going to follow in what remains of the present paper.

III

I would like to start the discussion of our problem by considering an anecdote concerning the first encounter of Tung Shan Shou Ch'u[11] with Master Yün Mên. At that time Tung Shan was still a young student of Zen. Later he became one of the most distinguished masters of the T'ang dynasty.

When Tung Shan came to Yün Mên for instruction, the latter asked him: "Where do you come from?" The *mondō* starts from this point.

> Tung Shan: "I come from Ch'a Tu (J.: Sato)."
> Yün Mên: "Where did you spend the summer?"
> Tung Shan: "At such-and-such a place in the Province of Hu Nan."
> Yün Mên: "I forgive you thirty blows with my stick (which you well deserve). You may now retire."

The next day Tung Shan came up to Yün Mên again and asked: "What wrong did I do yesterday to deserve thirty blows?" Thereupon the master gave a cry of sharp reproof: "You stupid rice-bag! Is that the way you wander all over the country?"[12]

There is something typically Zen in this dialogue between Tung Shan and Yün Mên. But why indeed did Tung Shang deserve in the eyes of the master thirty blows with a stick? Let us for a moment ponder upon this problem.

"Where do you come from?" This is one of those innocent-looking questions which are often addressed by a Zen master to a newly-arrived monk. By the answer given, whether verbal or non-verbal, the master can immediately see through the newcomer. Without any

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[11] Tung Shan Shou Ch'u (J.: Tōzan Shusho), the chief disciple of Yün Mên, not to be confused with Tung Shan Liang Chieh (J.: Tōzan Ryōkai, 807–869), the co-founder of Ts'ao Tung (J.: Sōtō) Sect. He is known particularly for his answer: "Three pounds of flax!" which he gave when asked by a monk: "What is the Buddha?" For Yün Mên, see Note (6).

[12] Reproduced from *Ch'uang Têng Lu* (J.: *Dentō Roku* XXIII).

further questioning, he now knows at what stage of spiritual training the monk stands. Whatever answer the latter may give, or even before he opens his mouth to utter a word, the very mental attitude of the monk to answer the question discloses to the eyes of the master how the monk looks at the relation between himself and the so-called "external" or objective world.

"Where do you come from?" These simple words which would at the first glance look like quite a conventional question, thus carry in a Zen context extraordinary weight, for the question concerns the very ground of one's own being, the real location of one's own existence. Otherwise expressed, "Where do you come from?" is a question that may very well be reformulated in terms of the interior and exterior. "Do you originally come from the inside or the outside?" That is to say, "Where is your home?" or "Where do you really live?"

Suppose I say: "I come from Tokyo," taking the words of the master ("Where do you come from") to be asking about the geographical location of the place from which I have come. According to the Zen documents, innumerable monks have fallen into this pitfall. "But what kind of 'Tokyo' do you mean?" The master usually does not take pains to ask such a question in such a form. But, if verbally formulated, the attitude of the master would necessarily assume this form. And no sooner is this second question asked by the master, whether implicitly or explicitly, than the external "Tokyo" becomes on the spot internalized. "Tokyo" thus internalized would exactly be the thing which Zen usually refers to by a more characteristic expression: "Your original Face which you had even before your parents were born."

The common-sense statement that I come from Tokyo as an external, i.e., geographical place, is in a Zen dialogue totally meaningless. The very fact of my coming-from-Tokyo must be understood in a spiritual sense, i.e., as something taking place in the dimension of spiritual awareness. Every step I take in this "coming" is for Zen a step in self-realization. Thus the Zen master is not primarily

interested in external geography: what is really important to him is my internal geography, that is to say, to what extent I have realized my coming-from-Tokyo as a spiritual event.

However, we must not commit the mistake of regarding the internalized Tokyo as an "internal" place standing against the "external" world. For an internal place understood in such a way would simply be another external place. What is really meant is a spiritual domain where the reality is witnessed in its original undifferentiation before it is bifurcated into the interior and exterior.

The young Tung Shan deserved thirty blows with a stick because he took Yün Mên's question in terms of external geography. This is because his answer had little to do with his internal geography, and, of course, much less with the spiritual domain of undifferentiation which lies beyond even the very distinction between internal and external geography.

Thus it will be clear that Zen begins by establishing a distinction between the interior and exterior, but that this distinction itself is to be considered something that must ultimately be superseded.

Let us now go back once again to the starting-point, and reconsider the whole process by which the initial distinction between the interior and exterior becomes nullified and the two ontological regions become "smoothed out into one whole sheet."

In analyzing what we might properly call Zen experience (i.e., the personal realization of the state of enlightenment) in terms of the relation between the interior and exterior, we find two theoretical possibilities. We may describe them as:

(1) The interior becoming exterior, or the externalization of the internal.

(2) The exterior becoming interior, or the internalization of the external world.

In the first case (which is often popularly referred to by saying: "Man becomes the thing"), one suddenly experiences one's "I" (the internal) loosing its own existential identity and becoming

completely fused into, and identified with, an "external" object. Man *becomes* a flower. Man *becomes* a bamboo. This experience, however, does not establish itself as an authentically Zen experience unless man goes further until the single flower or bamboo with which he has been identified, is in his spiritual awareness seen to contain the whole world of Being. At such a stage the "I" expands to the ultimate limits of the universe. That is to say, the "I" is no longer an *I* as an independent entity: It is no longer a subject standing against the objective world.

In the second case, i.e., the internalization of the external, what has heretofore been regarded as "external" to one's self becomes suddenly taken into the mind. Then everything that happens and is observed in the so-called "external" world comes to be seen as a working of the mind, as a particular self-determination of the mind. Every "external" event comes to be seen as an "internal" event. Man feels himself filled with an undeniable realization that he, his mind-and-body, has become completely transparent, having lost its existential opaqueness that would offer resistance to all things coming from the "outside." Man feels himself — to use an expression of Master Han Shan (J.: Kanzan, 16th century) — as "one great illuminating whole, infinitely lucid and serene." His mind now is to be likened to an all-embracing mirror in which the mountains, rivers and the earth with all the splendor and beauty of Nature are freely reflected. Thus the "external" world is re-created in a different dimension as an "internal" landscape. The mind of man in such a state, however, is no longer the individual mind of an individual person. It is now what Buddhism designates as the Mind.

These two (apparently opposite, but ultimately and in reality identical) interpretations of Zen experience would require more detailed elucidation. This will be done presently.

But before going into further details, I would devote a few pages to the discussion of a peculiar kind of spiritual experience which is typical of Zen and which in fact presents in miniature the very structure of *satori* or Zen enlightenment in terms of the fundamental

relation between the interior and exterior.

The correspondence between the interior and exterior, leading ultimately to the complete unification of the two, whether we approach it in terms of the first possibility or the second that have just been briefly touched upon, can clearly be observed in the most concise and concentrated form in the experience of "living" a certain decisive instant at which a momentary communion is realized between interior and exterior. Just a click is produced on a special spiritual plane, and enlightenment is already there, fully actualized.

The particular manner in which this "click" as a spiritual event arrives to man is well illustrated by the celebrated anecdote accounting how Master Hsiang Yen (J.: Kyōgen)[13] experienced *satori* for the first time in his life.

After many years of desperate and futile efforts to attain enlightenment, Hsiang Yen, in a state of utter despair, came to the conclusion that he was not destined in this life to see into the secret of Reality, and that, therefore, it was better for him to devote himself, instead, to some meritorious work. He decided to become a grave keeper to a famous master, built for himself a reed-thatched hermitage, and lived there in complete seclusion from others. One day, while sweeping the ground, a small stone rapped against a bamboo. All of sudden, quite unexpectedly, the hearing of the sound of a stone striking a bamboo awakened in his mind something which he had never dreamt of. It was the "click" of which mention has just been made. And it was the attainment of enlightenment. The awakening came to him as an experience of his own self and the whole objective world being all smashed up into a state of undifferentiation.

Upon this Hsiang Yen composed the following famous *gāthā*:

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[13]Hsiang Yen Chi Hsien (J.: Kyōgen Chikan, dates unknown), the leading disciple of Wei Shan Ling Yü (J.: Isan Reiyū, 771–853) in the T'ang dynasty. He is widely known precisely for the incident here related.

The sharp sound of a stone striking a bamboo!
And all I had learnt was at once forgotten.
No need there had been for training and disipline.[14]
Through every act and movement of everyday life
I manifest the eternal Way.
No longer shall I ever fall into a hidden trap.
Leaving no trace behind me shall I go everywhere.

It is recorded that many a man of Zen came to this kind of Awakening by the stimulation of quite an insignificant — so it would look to the outsiders — sense perception: the call of a bird, the sound of a bell, the human voice, the sight of a flower blooming, etc. When the mind is spiritually matured, anything can serve as the spark to set off the explosion of the inner energies in a way hitherto undreamt of. The Buddha is said to have suddenly experienced the Awakening when by chance he looked at the morning star. Master Wu Mên[15] (J.: Mumon) had struggled for six years with the above-mentioned *kōan* of Chao Chou's "No!" One day, as he heard the beating of the drum announcing mealtime he was suddenly awakened. The famous Japanese Zen master Hakuin[16] had his Awakening when he heard the sound of a temple bell announcing the dawn as he was sitting in deep meditation one cold winter night. He is said to have jumped up with overflowing joy. Master Ling Yün[17] had undergone a most rigorous training without, however, being able to attain enlightenment. While on a journey, he sat down to have some rest and without any definite intention turned his eyes toward a village lying far-off under the mountain. It was springtime. Quite accidentally his eyes were caught by peaches in full bloom there. All of a sudden he realized that he was

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[14]i.e., From the very beginning, I have been in the state of enlightenment, although I have not been aware of the fact.

[15]For Master Wu Mên, see Note 10.

[16]Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769), the greatest representative of the Rinzai (Lin Chi) school of Zen in Japan, known for his newly-devised *kōan* of "Listen to the sound of one hand clapping."

[17]Ling Yün Chih Ch'in (J.: Rei-un Shigon, dates unknown), a famous Zen master of the T'ang dynasty.

an enlightened man. Examples of this sort can be given almost indefinitely.

What happened to these people? For the purpose of elucidating this point, let us try to reconstruct the process by which Master Hsiang Yen was finally led to enlightenment by hearing the sound of a small stone striking a bamboo.

Hsiang Yen was sweeping the ground. He was absorbed in the work. His mind emptied of all disturbing thoughts and images, with absolute concentration, he was sweeping the ground, without thinking of anything, without being conscious even of his own bodily movement. As is natural with a man rigorously trained and disciplined in meditation, his act of sweeping the ground was itself a form of a practical *samādhi*. It is not that the sweeping of the ground has the symbolic significance of the purification of the mind. The very absorption of the whole person — the mind-and-body — in the activity of sweeping the ground has exactly the same function as that of being absorbed in profound meditation. It is the actualization of what Zen usually calls the state of the "no-mind" (*wu-hsin*, J.: *mu-shin*).

In such a state there is no consciousness of the earth, fallen leaves, and stones as "external" objects. Nor is there conciousness of the "I" who is sweeping the ground as the "internal" source of action. Already in this state of practical *samādhi* or "no-mind," Zen is fully realized. Since there is no consciousness of the "I" as distinguished from the things, there is here no distinction between the interior and exterior. There is only Hsiang Yen. Or there is only the world. Yet Hsiang Yen in such a state, while being Hsiang Yen, *is* the All. Hsiang Yen and the world are thus completely at one. This, however, is not yet the state of enlightenment.

In order that all this be realized specifically as "enlightenment," this absolute unity of the interior and exterior must necessarily be brought into the incandescent light of consciousness in its original absolute simplicity. In the case of Master Hsiang Yen, the spark was provided by the sound of a small stone which he swept against a

bamboo. By this sense-stimulation he is awakened from the *samādhi*. All of a sudden he becomes aware of the earth and the leaves on the ground: he becomes aware of the rake in his hand, the movement of his hands, and arms; he becomes aware of his own self, too. The whole world including himself comes back to him. However, for Hsiang Yen it is not the mere emergence of the external world out of nowhere. Nor is it the resuscitation of his old self. It is rather the emergence or resuscitation of a reality prior to its bifurcation into the interior and exterior. In other words, Hsiang Yen at that very instant realized in a flash the fact that the interior and exterior had already been "one whole sheet" while he had been absorbed in sweeping the ground, and that such was the original mode of being of Reality. The moment of enlightenment as understood by Zen comes when man regains the awareness of the subject and object on a spiritual plane transcending the subject-object bifurcation.

Thus when Master Hsiang Yen in the midst of *samādhi* heard the sound of a small stone striking a bamboo, he was himself the sound of the stone hitting against the bamboo. And the sound was the whole universe. When Hakuin was awakened from meditation by the sound of a temple bell ringing, it was the sound of himself ringing that he heard. The whole universe was the sound of the bell. And Hakuin himself was the sound of the bell listening to the sound of the bell. In the same way, when Ling Yün was enlightened by the sight of peaches blooming afar, he was the peach blossoms. The universe was the fragrance of the peaches, and he himself was the fragrant universe.

What is actually experienced and realized in cases like these may perhaps be best described as the sudden realization of the ontological transparency of all things, including both the things existing in the "external" world and the human subject which is ordinarily supposed to be looking at them from the outside. Both the "external" things and the "internal" of man divest themselves of their ontological opaqueness, become totally transparent, pervade each other, and become submerged into one.

It is no accident that in Zen as well as in many other traditions of mysticism such a situation is often described in terms of the essential luminosity of being. "Light" is but a metaphor for the particular nature of things seen in the supra-sensible and supra-intellectual dimension of the mind. But the metaphor is so appropriate that many a mystic has really experienced the mutual relation between the human "I" and the things of the "external" world and the mutual relation between the different things themselves as an interpenetration of different lights. It is the case, for instance, with the *ishrāqīyah* "illuminationism" of the Islamic mystic-philosopher, Suhrawardī of Aleppo. And so it is with Buddhism. The subject and object, the interior and exterior, are here seen as two different lights which, though each remaining an independent light, freely penetrate each other without the least obstruction from either side, so that the two merge into one all-pervading Light illuminating itself as a purely luminous whole.

IV

With these preliminaries we are now in a position to turn to the discussion of the above-mentioned two theoretical possibilities of interpreting what we may properly call Zen experience or the Zen vision of Being: namely (1) the externalization of the internal and (2) the internalization of the external. I treat these two apparently opposite ways as "theoretical" possibilities, because whichever way one may choose one is sure to be led to exactly the same result. Whether you externalize the internal or internalize the external, you will end up by arriving at one and the same vision of Being. As a matter of historical fact, however, there are Zen masters who took the first of these two ways, and there are others who chose the second. Let us first discuss the externalization of the internal.

The externalization of the internal in a Zen context starts from the loss of the ego consciousness on the part of man in his encounter

with an "external" object. Losing the consciousness of the empirical ego-subject — which is according to Buddhism precisely the thing which is responsible for veiling our spiritual eyes and which thus prevents us from recognizing the metaphysical ground of Being — man gets submerged in the object. "Man *becomes* the thing" to use again the popular Zen expression. "Man *becomes* the bamboo" for example, or "man *becomes* the flower." Master Dōgen in a celebrated passage of his work, *Shōbōgenzō*[18] says:

> Delusion consists in your establishing the ego-subject and acting upon objects through it. Enlightenment, on the contrary, consists in letting the things act upon you and letting them illumine yourself. ... In looking at a thing, put the whole of your mind-body into the act; in listening to a sound, put the whole of your mind-body into the act (in such a way that your ego may become lost and submerged in the thing seen or heard). Then, and then only will you be able to grasp Reality in its original suchness. In such a case, your spiritual grasp of the thing will be quite different from a mirror reflecting the image of something or the moon being reflected on the surface of water, (for the mirror and the thing reflected therein, or the water and the moon, still remain two entities, each maintaining its own identity.) (In the case of the spiritual unification of yourself and a thing, on the contrary,) if either one of the two makes itself manifest, the other completely disappears, the latter being submerged in the former. (That is to say, in the situation here at issue in particular, the "I" disappears completely and the thing only remains manifest.)
>
> Now to get disciplined in the way of the Buddha means nothing other than getting disciplined in properly dealing with your own self. To get disciplined in properly dealing with your own self means nothing other than forgetting your own self. To forget your own self means nothing other than your being illumined by the "external" things. To be illumined by the things means nothing other than your obliterating the

[18]Dōgen (1200–1253), a Japanese Zen master of the Kamakura period. His *Shōbōgenzō* is a work characterized by an unsurpassed philosophical depth of thought, though, to be sure, it was not intended to be a work of Zen philosophy. The passage here quoted in translation is from a chapter entitled *Genjō Kōan* (Iwanami Series of Japanese Thought XII–XIII: *Dōgen*, Tokyo, 1970–1972, vol I, pp. 33–36).

distinction between your (so-called) ego and the (so-called) egos of other things.

It will be clear that a deep, spiritual empathy with all things in Nature is what characterizes the externalization of the internal as experienced in the form of the total submersion of the human ego in an object, the submersion being so complete and total that the word "object" loses its semantic basis. In the more limited field of aesthetic enjoyment, this kind of empathy is commonly experienced when, for instance, one is intently listening to an enchanting piece of music.

> Music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts...
>
> (T. S. Eliot: Four Quartets).

As Professor William Johnston[19] aptly remarks: "In this typical, intense moment, music is heard so deeply that there is no longer a person listening and music listened to; there is no 'I' opposed to 'music': there is simply music without subject and object." In other words, the whole universe is filled with music: the whole universe *is* music. We can express the same thing in a somewhat different form by saying that the "I" has died to itself and has been reborn in the form of music. In this kind of aesthetic experience Zen may be said to be already realized, whether one calls it "Zen" or not. Zen, however, requires that one should be in exactly the same state with regard to everything, not only while listening to music. One should become a bamboo. One should become a mountain. One should become the sound of a bell. This is what Zen means by the expression: "seeing into the nature of the things."

It is, however, of utmost importance to remember in this connection that one's merely losing oneself and "becoming" music, bamboo,

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[19] *The Still Point — Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism*, Perennial Library, Harper & Row, New York, 1971, p.21.

flower or any other thing, does not constitute Zen experience in the fullest sense of the term. While one is in the state of complete oneness with the "object," whatever it may be, which is realized in one's being totally absorbed in the contemplation of the thing, one is at most on the threshold of Zen. Strictly speaking, this state is not yet Zen. It may develop into Zen experience, as it may become something else. Enlightenment as the Zen tradition understands it is still far from being actualized.

Suppose I am intently gazing at a flower, for example. Suppose further that I have, in so doing, lost myself and entered into the flower in the manner explained above. I have now become the flower. I *am* the flower. I am living as the flower. From the viewpoint of Zen, however, this should not be considered the final stage of the spiritual discipline. Zen emphasizes that I should go on further until I reach what is designated in the traditional terminology of Oriental philosophy as a state prior to subject-object bifurcation. That is to say, my existential submersion into the flower must be perfect and complete to such an extent that there remains absolutely no consciousness of myself, nor even of the flower. This spiritual state of absolute unification which, psychologically is a kind of unconsciousness, is to be realized as the total disappearance of the flower or music as well as of the "I." There is in such a state no flower, no music, just as there is no trace of the "I." What is really actualized here is Something which is absolutely undifferentiated and undivided; it is Awareness pure and simple with neither subject nor object.

But even this is not yet the ultimate stage to be reached in Zen discipline. In order that there be the experience of enlightenment, man must be awakened from this pure Awareness. The absolutely undivided Something divides itself again as the "I" and, for instance, the flower. And at the precise moment of this bifurcation, the flower suddenly and unexpectedly emerges as an absolute Flower. The painter paints this absolute Flower in his picture. The poet sings of this Flower in his poem. A flower has now re-established itself as the Flower, the absolute Flower. The latter is a flower blooming in a

spiritual atmosphere which is essentially different from that in which blooms an ordinary flower. And yet the two are one and the same flower. This situation is what Dōgen refers to when he remarks that the "mountain and rivers (as they appear in the state of enlightenment) must not be confused with the ordinary mountains and rivers," although they are the same old mountains and rivers.

Nothing presents the process by which this Zen world-view becomes established, better — and in a manner more typical of Zen — than the oft-quoted saying of Master Ch'ing Yüan.[20] He said:

> Thirty years ago, before this aged monk (i.e., I) got into Zen training, I used to see a mountain as a mountain and a river as a river.
> Thereafter I had the chance to meet enlightened masters and, under their guidance I could attain enlightenment to some extent. At this stage, when I saw a mountain: lo! it was not a mountain. When I saw a river: lo! it was not a river.
> But in these days I have settled down to a position of final tranquility. As I used to do in my first years, now I see a mountain just as a mountain and a river just as a river.

Here we see the characteristic Zen view of Reality neatly analyzed into three distinctive stages.

(1) The initial stage, corresponding to the world-experience of an ordinary man, at which the knower and the known are sharply distinguished from one another as two separate entities, and at which a mountain, for example, is seen by the perceiving "I" as an objective thing called "mountain."

(2) The middle stage, corresponding to what I have just explained as a state of absolute unification, a spiritual state prior to subject-object bifurcation. At this stage the so-called "external" world is deprived of its ontological solidity. Here the very expression: "I see a mountain" is strictly a false statement, for there is neither the "I" which sees nor the mountain which is seen. If there is anything here

[20]Ch'ing Yüan Wei Hsin (J.: Seigen Ishin), an outstanding master in the Sung dynasty (11th century).

it is the absolutely undivided awareness of Something eternally illuminating itself as the whole universe. In such a state, a mountain of course is not a mountain: the mountain is recognizable only as a no-mountain.

(3) The final stage, a stage of infinite freedom and tranquility, at which the undivided Something divides itself into subject and object in the very midst of the original oneness, the latter being still kept intact in spite of the apparent subject-object bifurcation. And the result is that the subject and object (the "I" and the mountain) are separated from one another, and merged into one another, the separation and merging being one and the same act of the originally undivided Something. Thus at the very moment that the "I" and the mountain come out of the Something, they merge into one another and become one: and this one thing establishes itself as the absolute Mountain. Yet, the absolute Mountain, concealing in itself a complex nature such as has now been described, *is* just a simple mountain. The above-mentioned Cypress-Tree-in-the-Courtyard of Master Chao Chou is a typical example of this kind of "external" thing. And such is in fact the nature of the externalization of the internal as we understand it in Zen.

V

Now we turn to the reverse of what we have just discussed, i.e., the internalization of the external, the spiritual process by which the world of Nature (the so-called "external" world) becomes internalized and comes to be established as an "internal" landscape. As I have indicated earlier, the underlying spiritual event itself is in both cases one and the same. How could it be otherwise? For there cannot be two different Zen experiences that would stand diametrically opposed to each other. Throughout its history Zen has always been one, but it has produced divergent forms principally at the level of theorization. Diversity has also appeared with regard to the ways man actually experiences the moment of enlightenment and what

happens thereafter. The internalization of the external which we are going to discuss differs only in this sense from the externalization of the internal.

In the case of the externalization of the internal which we have just examined, what strikes the keynote is a pervading empathy on the part of man with all things in Nature. The basic formula is: Man loses his "I," dies to himself, fuses into an "external" thing, then loses sight of the "external" thing, and finally becomes resuscitated in the form of that particular "external" thing as a concrete manifestation of the whole world of Being. Man, in short, *becomes* the thing, and *is* the thing: and by being the thing is the All.

In the case of the internalization of the external, on the contrary, man comes to a sudden realization that what he has thought to be "external" to himself is in truth "internal." The world does not exist outside me: it is within myself, it is me. Everything that man has hitherto imagined to be taking place outside himself has in reality been taking place in an interior space. The real problem, however, is: How should we understand this "interior space?" Does the human mind constitute an interior space in which all things exist and happen as "internal" things and "internal" events? We are thus directly led to the problem of the Mind as it is understood by Zen.

The famous *kōan* of Hui Nêng's Flag-Flapping-in-the-Wind[21] may be adduced here as a suitable illustration of the case.

After having attained enlightenment under Master Hung Jên,[22] the Fifth Patriarch, Hui Nêng went to the South and stayed in Kuang Chou or Canton. There, one day, he was listening to a lecture on

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[21]Hui Nêng (J.: Enō, 683–713), the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China. His appearance marks a decisive turning point in the historical development of Zen. Zen that had up to his time remained largely Indian became completely sinicized by his activity. The anecdote here related is recorded in the *Wu Mên Kuan* (J.: *Mumon Kan*, see Note 10) as Case No. XXIX. I have analyzed this anecdote in "The Structure of Selfhood in Zen Buddhism," (*op. cit., Eranos 38–1969*), pp. 131–132.

[22]Hung Jên (J.: Gunin, 605–675).

Buddhism in one of the temples. Suddenly the wind rose and the flag at the temple gate[23] began to flap. It was then that the incident related in the *kōan* occurred. The *kōan* reads as follows:

> While the Sixth Patriarch was there, the wind began to flap the flag. There were two monks there, who started an argument about it. One of them remarked, "Look! The flag is moving." The other retorted: "No! It is the wind that is moving."
> They argued back and forth endlessly, without being able to reach the truth.
> (Abruptly Hui Nêng cut short the fruitless argument) by saying: "It is not that the wind is moving, it is not that the flag is moving. O honorable Brethren, it is in reality your minds that are moving!" The two monks stood aghast.

Here we have, so it would seem, the most obvious case of the internalization of the external. The wind blows in the mind. The flag flaps in the mind. Everything happens in the mind. Nothing remains outside the mind. The flag flapping in the wind ceases to be an event occurring in the external world. The whole event (and implicitly the whole universe) is internalized and re-presented as being in the interior space. In reality however, the structure of the "internalization" here at issue is not as simple as it might appear to those who read this *kōan* without any previous acquaintance with Zen teaching. Let us elucidate this point from a somewhat different angle.

In the same *Wu Mên Kuan*[24] there is a passage in which Chao Chou, while still a student, asks his master Nan Ch'üan: "What is the Way (i.e., the absolute Reality)?" and gets the answer: "The ordinary mind — that is the Way." This well-known dictum: "The ordinary mind — that is the Way" is given a poetic interpretation by Master Wu Mên in his commentary upon this *kōan*. It runs:

> Fragrant flowers in spring, the silver moon in autumn,
> Cool breeze in summer, white snow in winter!

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[23]A flag hung out at a temple gate was usually the announcement that a lecture or sermon was being given.

[24]Case No. XIX.

If the mind is not disturbed by trivial matters,
Every day is a happy time in the life of men.

What, then, is this "ordinary mind" in which flowers bloom in spring, the moon shines in autumn, a refreshing breeze blows in summer, and the snow is white in winter? These characteristic things of the four seasons are presented by Wu Mên as an internal landscape of the "ordinary mind," just as the flapping of the flag was presented by Hui Nêng as the internal flapping of the mind.

It will be clear to begin with that the "mind" here spoken of is the mind of an enlightened man, the enlightened mind. The "ordinary" mind of Nan Ch'üan is not, in this sense, an ordinary mind. Quite the contrary. Far from being the empirical consciousness of the ego-substance as normally understood under the word, what is meant by the "ordinary mind" is the Mind (technically called the "non-mind") which is realized in a spiritual state prior to or beyond the subject-object bifurcation, the mind that has expanded to the fullest limits of the whole universe. It is not the *ordinary* mind as the locus of our empirical consciousness. What is meant is the Reality, the very ground of Being, which is eternally aware of itself.

The strange fact about this Mind, however, is that it does not (and cannot) function in a concrete way except as completely identified with our empirical consciousness. The Mind is something noumenal which functions only in the phenomenal. It is precisely in this sense that Nan Ch'üan calls it the "ordinary mind." And it is only in this sense that the flapping of a flag or the blooming of flowers in spring may be described as an "internal" event. Thus understood, nothing in fact exists outside the "mind," nor does anything occur outside the "mind." Whatever exists in the so-called external world as a phenomenon is but a manifestation-form of the "mind," the noumenal. Whatever occurs in the external world is a movement of the "mind," the noumenal. This is what we mean by the term "mind" with a capital *M*.

The structure of the Mind thus understood is complicated because it is, thus, of an apparently self-contradictory nature: namely,

that it is, on one hand, entirely different from the empirical consciousness in that it is of a super-sensible, and super-rational dimension of Being, but that it is, on the other, completely and inseparably identified with the empirical consciousness. Nan Ch'üan's "The ordinary mind — that is the Way" refers to this latter aspect of the mind.

There is an ancient Zen dictum which runs: "The mountains, the rivers, the earth — indeed everything that exists or that happens — are without a single exception your own mind." Commenting upon this statement Master Musō[25] of the late Kamakura period in Japan makes the following remark. There are monks, he says, who tend to think that such daily activities like eating, drinking, washing their hands, putting on and putting off the garments, going to bed, etc., are all mundane acts having nothing to do with Zen discipline; they think that they are seriously engaged in Zen discipline only while they sit cross-legged in meditation. Such people, according to Master Musō, fall into this grave mistake "because they recognize things outside the mind," that is, because they believe that the world exists outside their minds. Those are men who do not understand the real meaning of the dictum: "The mountains, the rivers, and the earth are your own mind."[26] Otherwise expressed, these people are completely ignorant of the nature of the Mind which is being activated at every moment as the "ordinary" minds of individual men.

> A monk once asked Master Chao Chou: "What kind of thing is my mind?"
> To this Chao Chou replied by asking the monk: "Have you already eaten your meal?"
> The monk: "Yes, I have."
> Chao Chou: "Then wash your rice bowl!"

The monk feels hungry, and he eats his meal. Having finished

[25] "National Teacher" Musō (1275–1351), one of the most outstanding Zen masters particularly famous in the history of Japanese culture for his landscape gardening.

[26] Musō Kokushi: *Muchū Mondō Shū*, II.

eating, he washes the rice bowl. Chao Chou indicates how the Mind is being activated in the midst of all these natural, daily activities. That is to say, in each of the minds which function through the most commonplace doings, the Mind is being unmistakably activated. The "ordinary mind" is thus a locus of an infinite spiritual energy, which, once its individual determination is removed, will instantaneously expand itself to the farthest limits of the whole universe.

From the viewpoint of such accomplished masters as Nan Ch'üan and Chao Chou, the "ordinary mind" has nothing extraordinary about it. For them the "ordinary mind" is just an ordinary mind. But there is at its back the awareness of the Mind. It is an ordinary mind that has been reached through the awareness of the "no-mind," just as the ordinary mountain about which we talked earlier in discussing the externalization of the internal, is just an ordinary mountain that has been reached after it has gone through the stage of a no-mountain. In other words, the "ordinary mind" of a Nan Ch'üan is not our empirical consciousness as originally given. It is the "ordinary mind" that has been realized through the actual experience of enlightenment.

The old Zen records abound in examples showing how difficult it was for Zen students to grasp this point.

> A monk once asked Master Ch'ang Sha:[27] "How will it be possible to transform (i.e., internalize) the mountains, rivers and the great earth, and reduce them to my own mind?"
> Ch'ang Sha: "How will it be possible, indeed, to transform the mountains, rivers and the great earth, and reduce them to my own mind?"
> Monk: "I do not understand you."

In this well-known *mondō*, the monk is questioning the validity of the dictum: "All things are the Mind." In so doing he is evidently taking the position of naive realism. For him, the "mind" is the ordinary mind *before* it has gone through the stage of the Mind. It is

[27]Ch'ang Sha Ching Tsên (J.: Chōsha Keishin, dates unknown), a famous Zen master of the T'ang dynasty (9th century), the leading disciple of Nan Ch'üan.

empirical consciousness standing against the mountains and rivers as "objects" external to it. Ch'ang Sha's answer is a rhetorical question, meaning that it is utterly impossible to bring the "external" world into the interior space of such a mind. The monk could not understand the point.

The fact that the "mind" as understood by Ch'ang Sha himself is not an internal world standing opposed to the external world, is clearly shown by the following famous *mondō*:

> A monk asked Ch'ang Sha: "What kind of thing is my mind?"
> Ch'ang Sha: "The whole universe is your mind."
> The monk: "If it is so, I would have no place to put myself in."
> Ch'ang Sha: "Quite the contrary: this precisely is the place for you to put yourself in."
> The monk: "What, then, is the place for me to put myself in?"
> Ch'ang Sha: "A boundless ocean! The water is deep, unfathomably deep!"
> The monk: "That is beyond my comprehension."
> Ch'ang Sha: "See the huge fishes and tiny fishes, swimming up and down as they like!"

There is obviously a fundamental lack of understanding between the monk and Ch'ang Sha. For the monk is talking about the mind, his own individual, empirical consciousness, whereas Ch'ang Sha is talking about the Mind. Rather than emphasizing the actual identity of the empirical mind and the cosmic Mind, the master here intentionally distinguishes the former from the latter and tries to make the monk realize that what he considers to be *his own* mind is in reality Something like a boundless ocean of unfathomable depths, in which fishes, big and small, i.e., all things that exist, find each its proper place, enjoying boundless existential freedom.

The same idea has been given a poetic expression by Master Hung Chih[28] in the following way:

[28]Hung Chih Chêng Chüeh (J.: Wanshi Shōkaku, 1091–1157), one of the greatest masters of the Sung dynasty. What is here quoted in translation are the closing words of his celebrated explanation of the spirit of *zazen*-practice.

The water is limpid, transparent to the bottom,
And the fishes are swimming leisurely and slowly.
Immense are the skies, boundlessly extending,
And the birds are flying far, far away.

And Dōgen:[29]

The fishes go in the water. They swim on and on without ever reaching the boundary of the water.
The birds fly in the sky. They fly on and on without ever reaching the boundary of the sky.

Nothing in fact could describe the "internal" landscape of the Mind more beautifully than these words. And it is only in the metaphysical dimension of the Mind that the "mountains, rivers, and the great earth" can be said to be "inside the mind." For every single thing is here this or that aspect of the Mind, and every single event is this or that movement of the Mind. And such is the internalization of the external as Zen understands It.

In ending, however, I must bring back your attention to what I emphasized at the outset: namely that the problem of the interior and exterior is after all but a pseudo-problem from the viewpoint of Zen. Once the distinction is made between the interior and exterior, the problem of how they are related to each other may — and perhaps must — be developed in terms of the externalization of the internal and the internalization of the external. But, strictly speaking, there is no such distinction: the distinction itself is a delusion. Here let me quote again a *kōan* which I have quoted earlier without giving any explanation.

A monk once asked Master Chao Chou: "Who is Chao Chou?"
Chao Chou replied: "East Gate, West Gate, South Gate, North Gate!"

That is to say, Chao Chou is completely open. All the gates of the City are open, and nothing is concealed. Chao Chou stands right in

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[29]On Dōgen, see Note 18. The words are found in the *Shōbōgenzō* (Chap. *Genjō Kōan, op. cit.*, I, p. 37).

the middle of the City, i.e., the middle of the Universe. One can come to see him from any and every direction. The Gates that have once been artificially established to separate the "interior" from the "exterior" are now wide-open. There is no "interior." There is no "exterior." There is just Chao Chou, and he is all-transparent.

THE TEMPORAL AND A-TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS OF REALITY IN CONFUCIAN METAPHYSICS

ERANOS 43
(1974)

I

"Norms in a changing world" — this is a theme which is most befitting to Confucian philosophy. For this theme in this very formulation does represent the central concern of all the philosophers of this school. It is the most basic theme of their thought. Everything starts from it; everything is said in reference to it. In fact the whole system or systems of Confucian metaphysics are nothing other than various elaborations, at various levels of thinking, of this central theme: norms in a changing world.

By "Confucian philosophy" I mean here the philosophical thought which developed in China in the Sung dynasty (960–1279 A.D.) among the followers of the teachings of Confucius.

This philosophy as a general whole may be presented as a philosophical elaboration of the basic ideas of the "Book of Changes" (*I Ching*). It would but be natural that it should find its central theme in the problem of the "norms in a changing world." For this is exactly the main problem of the whole book of *I Ching*. This *is* the philosophy itself of the *I Ching*. The *I Ching* observes everywhere in this world ceaseless changes and transformations. Under the flux and

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The theme of Eranos 43 (1974), that is, the 43rd Eranos Conference Yearbook, which is the compilation of lectures given at the Eranos Conference in 1974, was "Normen im Wandel der Zeit — Norms in a Changing World — Avenir et devenir des normes."

the unceasing change of things and events, however, the *I Ching* never fails to observe rational principles controlling them from within. In the infinite variety of things which go on changing from moment to moment in infinitely various ways, the *I Ching* finds laws and norms regulating the course of change while themselves remaining eternally identical and changeless.

As Ch'êng I Ch'uan says:[1]

> Although changes in the world are limitless, there is always constancy observable in the course of the sun and moon and in the alternation of cold and heat, and day and night. It is due to this (constancy and eternal order presiding over the continuous change of phenomena) that the Way (i.e., the metaphysical Ground of being) could function as the absolute norm for all things.

Thus the philosophy of the *I Ching* takes its start from man's observing always and everywhere the never-ceasing change of things. All things surrounding us, the world itself, and we ourselves who are observing them are in a constant state of flux. In this universal stream of being, nothing remains unchanged even for two consecutive moments. The ceaseless change of all things is a fact which is immediately evident to the senses, so evident indeed that nobody can deny it. The very fact that man is born into this world, grows up, then becomes decrepit, and finally dies and disappears from the world — this most elementary fact of human existence inescapably forces man to recognize the universal change of things. In this sense the *panta rhei* may be said to be a commonplace truism, something too obvious even to be worth mentioning. The important point, however, is that to this seemingly commonplace fact one can take a number of different attitudes, and that each different attitude one takes toward it has a grave bearing on one's world-view, be it philosophical or pre-philosophical.

Thus the attitude assumed by the Confucian thinkers of the Sung dynasty with regard to this problem characterizes in a very peculiar

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[1] *Erh Ch'êng I Shu*, XV.

way the entire system of their philosophy. The peculiarity of Confucian philosophy may best be brought to light by comparing it with another typical attitude toward the same problem, an attitude which stands just at antipode with the Confucian position. The reference is to the negative and pessimistic point of view which characterizes Buddhism both historically and structurally. On the basis of a fundamental attitude of negativism toward the universal and incessant change of things Buddhism builds up a grandiose system of metaphysics.

Buddhism starts from the observation of the inescapable change of all things. In this observation the universal change appears in the form of an ontological process by which a thing comes into being, continues to exist for some time, and sooner or later reaches its end and totally disappears from the domain of being.

Let us remark that the whole matter at this stage is capable of leading toward two entirely different world-views according to whether one places special emphasis on the initial point of the process, namely, the birth, i.e., coming into being of new things, or on its final point, namely, the death and disappearance of old things. As we shall see more fully later, Confucianism chooses the first alternative. Hence it is fundamentally optimistic. Universal change in the context of Confucian philosophy means the never-ceasing procreativeness of Heaven. Change here means life. In the *I Ching* we read:[2] "Ever-new life, that is (what is meant by) the change."

One thing appears; another thing appears therefrom, then another thing. Each of the things that come into being changes and grows, transforming itself into something new. There is thus no interruption in the chain of things that come into being, the chain itself never coming to a final end. This eternal continuation of new lives is, in brief, the meaning of word *i* (or "change").

Thus, in this view, the whole field of being is permeated by life

[2] *I Ching, Hsi Tz'ŭ Chuan*, Part I.

which goes on renewing itself without interruption and without end.

Completely different is the position taken by Buddhism. Instead of putting emphasis on the initial point of the above-mentioned process, it emphasizes its final phase, i.e., the inevitable decline, decrepitude, destruction and death. Buddhism, avoiding all self-deception, starts from a clear recognition of the negative aspects of the universal change. It is a religion which primarily intends to teach the way of deliverance — deliverance from the seemingly inescapable destiny of all things that exist — the way how to overcome the intrinsic tragedy of existence. In this respect, Buddhism, at least in its initial stage, is colored by an ontological outlook which is extraordinarily gloomy and pessimistic. Quite naturally, the universal change is, in the context of Buddhism, understood in the sense of ephemerality, transiency and impermanence of existence, instead of ever-new life or eternal procreativeness as was the case with the Confucian conception of the same incessant change of things.

Better than any lengthy theoretical explication, the opening passage of the famous *Hōjō-ki* ("The Record of a Hermit's Hut") gives us the "feel" of this intense tragic sense of existence which characterizes the Buddhist view on the essential ephemerality of all things in the world.[3]

> The river flows on ceaselessly; yet the water never remains the same. As the stream becomes slow and sluggish, the foam gathers on the surface of the water.
> A bubble breaks here, another forms there; then it disappears there, and another appears here again, none enduring for long.
> So indeed are the people living in this world. So also are their abodes... Like unto the foam on the water are human beings. A man dies here in the morning, while another is born there in the evening. The man who is born to die — who knows whence he comes and whither he goes? ...

[3] *Hōjō-ki* is a work of Kamo-no Chōmei (1155–1261), a Buddhist recluse who by this and other works made a name for himself in the history of Japanese Literature.

> No different from the dew on the petals of a morning glory are man and his abode, both perishing in a flurry as if they were disputing with each other the prize for impermanence. Sometimes the dew drops, leaving the flower behind; the flower remains, but only to wither in the morning sun. Sometimes the flower withers, leaving the dew behind; the dew remains, but it does not endure till the evening.

The tone of sadness which pervades the whole passage clearly suggests that the impermanence or ephemerality of all things is being felt, being experienced by the human subject as his own ephemerality. The ephemerality of things is here no longer an external fact which he could observe and think about calmly and objectively. The universal impermanence is here concentrated in his personal impermanence. It is his own existential problem, for, he realizes, his very existence as he lives it is at stake.

As the universal impermanence of *things* becomes subjectively transformed into the impermanence of *man*, an indescribable anxiety is aroused in his mind. It is this kind of existential pessimism that is at the bottom of Buddhism. Buddhism, and consequently Buddhist philosophy have their origin in the realization of the universal change of things in the form of the fundamental impermanence of the human subject who exists here and now in this world. This was precisely the motive by which the Buddha himself was actuated to leave the worldly affairs in pursuit of the supreme Wisdom. This, it would seem, accounts for the fact that a deep shadow of sadness darkens the entire history of Buddhism viewed as a whole. In spite of the bright outlook of man over life after enlightenment, and in spite of the gorgeous brilliance of the promised Pure-Land-in-the-West, the world-view of Buddhism is colored by the tragic sense of existence.

We step into a totally different world as we go into Confucianism. There is no dark spot in the Confucian world-view. Confucian philosophy has nothing to do with the tragic sense of existence. There is here no nervous trepidation observable, no anxiety, not even a trace of sadness. Man is no longer viewed as a being of tragedy, a subject of

inner crisis. This is but natural. For in the world as seen through the eyes of the Confucian philosophers, no element is contained which might lead man toward despondency, dejection and melancholy. Certainly, the recognition of the universal change is, as we have seen above, the starting-point and the basis of Confucian philosophy. In this respect and to this extent Confucianism is exactly the same as Buddhism. But the main point is that in Confucianism the incessant change of all things is not understood as impermanence or the ephemerality of existence. Change is the very manifestation of the unchangeable. Change *is* the eternal Law. Change *is* the unchangeable. There is an interesting anecdote[4] which has been handed down to us concerning this problem in the form of a short, but pungent exchange of words between Ch'êng I Ch'uan and one of his disciples, Han Ch'ih Kuo. The dialogue is as follows:

> One evening Han Ch'ih Kuo was sitting with Master Ch'êng. Han Ch'ih Kuo, sad and depressed, remarks: "Ah, it is already evening. One more day is gone!"
> To this Master Ch'êng says: "It is nothing but the eternal Law. It has always been like this. There is no reason for lamenting it." "But," the disciple retorts, "old people are going away." Master Ch'êng: "You may not go away."
> Han: "How is it possible that I should not go away?"
> Master Ch'êng: "If it is not possible, then you may go away."

This dialogue will very well be used as a Zen *kōan*. The disciple, Han Ch'ih Kuo says, "Ah, another day gone!" The day is gone never to come back. Although it is a change which repeats itself constantly, the evening tends to arouse in our mind sadness and melancholy. The darkness that stealthily creeps in reminds us of decline and decrepitude. It is naturally associated with old age and brings man closer to

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[4] *Erh Ch'êng I Shu* (*op. cit.*), XXI, Part I. Ch'êng I Ch'uan (or Ch'êng I, 1033–1107) was together with his elder brother Ch'êng Ming Tao (or Ch'êng Hao, 1032–1085), one of the leading figures of the Sung dynasty Confucianism. They are known as "Ch'êng brothers."

the consciousness of death. "Old people are going away." In the eyes of Master Ch'êng such an approach, albeit quite natural from the standpoint of common sense, is fundamentally mistaken. He rejects it at one stroke by simply pointing out that the transformation of the bright daylight into the darkness of the evening is nothing but a result of the creative activity of the eternal Law. He calls this eternal Law *ch'ang* meaning literally "constant" or "constancy." In his view, the change, i.e., seeming inconstancy, *is* constancy.

Ch'ang indicates that the course of universal change is strictly governed by the eternal Law. That there is incessant change in the world of being and that every change takes place, not haphazardly but in accordance with a definite regulatory principle so that the same change constantly repeats itself, always taking the same course — this precisely is what is meant by *ch'ang*. Thus Master Ch'êng acknowledges the change of things as it is found in nature, calmly without trepidation, without anxiety, saying:[5] "Where there is life there necessarily is death. Where there is a beginning there necessarily is an end. Only in this way is the universal constancy eternally maintained." Thus "constancy" (*ch'ang*) which in an ordinary context would mean eternal changelessness, means for a Confucian philosopher eternal changeableness.

The austere and sober, but fundamentally optimistic nature of Confucian philosophy is determined by this peculiar interpretation of the "change" of all things. And this interpretation is determined by the basic world-view of the *I Ching*. All things in this world are unceasingly moving; they go on changing without stopping even for a moment. The movement which affects the very core of everything inevitably leads it toward its end. But in no way is this suggestive of ephemerality. For the end is directly connected with a new beginning. The universal change is not a movement toward death. Quite to the contrary, it is rather a movement toward life, a new life. Confucian philosophy is fundamentally optimistic because it sees in the

[5] *Erh Ch'êng Wai Shu*, VII.

universal change the never-ceasing creative activity of the universal life-force. As the *I Ching* says:[6]

> The Way is everyday new.
> This is its glorious function.

This glorious function of the Way is exercised according to a strictly fixed principle as is typically exemplified by the periodical return of the four seasons — spring, summer, autumn and winter; then again spring ... and so on indefinitely. This represents the basic pattern of all cosmic movements. Whether or not it be easy to perceive, every cosmic movement is cyclic; it has a definite rhythm and periodicity. The rhythm is provided by the activity of the two cosmic principles, the *yin*-force and *yang*-force, which constantly wax and wane in strict correlation with each other. This idea is expressed by the *I Ching* with a concise statement as follows:[7]

> *Yin* at one time, *yang* at another — that is the Way.

Since the correlative relationship between *yin* and *yang* always and necessarily comes back to the same point, every movement in the world returns to its starting-point. And all movements being in this way essentially of a cyclic nature, the universal change is interminable and yet completed at the same time. Everything is unceasingly changing; yet, while actually changing, it remains unchanged. This is because change is nothing other than an immediate manifestation of an unchanging and unchangeable law.

In such a context, eternal impermanence or transiency *is* itself eternal permanence. The transiency of things does not represent

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[6] *Hsi Tz'ŭ Chuan* (*op. cit.*) Part I.

[7] *Ibid.* Pushing the metaphysical reflection a step further, Chu-tzŭ adds one word (*so-i* meaning the "ground") to the statement. The sentence then means: "*Yin* at one time, *yang* at another — the ground of this interchange is the Way," thus distinguishing between the *yin-yang* forces as the two fundamental aspects of the *ch'i* and the Way, i.e., the *t'ai chi* or supreme Principle of Being, as the ground sustaining the procreative activity of the *yin* and *yang*.

their inescapable destiny to fall into decay and perish. Rather, it represents the eternal unchangeableness of the Way. Confucian philosophy thus takes a definite stand against Buddhism, which regards the interminable change of things as *saṃsāra*.

Criticizing Buddhism in this respect, Ch'êng Ming Tao says:[8]

> Buddhism does not know the reality of *yin* and *yang*, day and night, old and new. (It simply considers them as *saṃsāra* and illusion). It is exclusively interested in talking about matters that are "above-form" (i.e., supersensible, super-or meta-physical). How could such a doctrine be identified with the thought of the Confucian sages?

The Confucian philosophers do not treat the sensible phenomena disparagingly as false and illusive appearances to be dispelled from our vision of reality as soon as possible. On the contrary, the physical in their view is as real as the metaphysical. The physical world characterized by unceasing changes and transformations is nothing other than the very metaphysical in its active aspect. Changes and transformations that are observable in the physical dimension of reality are the direct, visible manifestation of the dynamic nature of the eternally unchangeable metaphysical Law.

The hexagram XXXII of the *I Ching*, i.e., the hexagram called *Hêng* (J.: *kō*) meaning "endurance" or "constancy" is interpreted by the Confucian philosophers in the light of this observation.

I shall not go into the explanation of the fairly complicated reason why the organization of this hexagram represents endurance and constancy. Suffice it here to remark the following point: the upper trigram (*chên*, J.: *shin*) symbolizes thunder and the lower (*sun*, J.: *son*) wind, the hexagram thus symbolizing thunder carried by wind, or

[8] *Erh Ch'êng I Shu* (*op. cit.*), XIV, quoted in the *Chin Ssŭ Lu*, XIII, 8.

thunder and wind being combined with each other. Of particular relevance to our present topic is that rolling thunder and blowing wind are both representative of violent movement. Two violently mobile forces strengthening each other, the combined mobility goes to the extreme. It is highly significant from the view-point of our main subject that for the formation of this hexagram indicating long-lasting existence and unchangeableness two symbols are used which are indicative of extreme mobility. Ch'êng I Ch'uan in his famous "Commentary on *I Ching*" makes the following remark concerning this hexagram:[9]

> It is universally true that nothing could be rigidly immobile and yet constant (*hêng*). Whatever moves (and changes) necessarily comes to an end, but the end is always followed immediately by a new beginning. This is precisely what maintains (the course of the Way) eternally constant and interminable...
>
> Thus constancy does not mean rigidly fixed immobility. Whatever is absolutely immobile cannot be constant. Rather, constancy consists in that a thing goes on changing and transforming interminably with the flow of time...
>
> What is eternally unchanging in the world of nature and what is eternally unchanging in human relations can be known only by those who really know the Way.

All things in the world are in a state of flux. Unceasingly they change and transform in myriads of different ways. The Confucian sages of old established sixty-four hexagrams in order to reduce these infinite forms of change to their basic patterns. Under these basic patterns of universal change the man of Wisdom must grasp the eternal laws governing them from within, and then under these individual laws of change he is expected to recognize the supreme Law of change. Then only will he be a man who really knows the Way to whom reference is made in the passage just cited.

However, the meaning and significance of the Confucian conception of change can only be fully understood when we have grasped

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[9] *I Ch'uan I Ch'uan*, Comm. ad *Hêng*.

the structure of the metaphysics on which it is based. And the metaphysical theory of Confucianism in its turn becomes fully understandable only when we have studied the peculiar method of spiritual training on which it is based.

II

Let us now turn to the method of spiritual discipline which was cultivated and assiduously practiced by the Confucian philosophers of the Sung dynasty. In explaining the process of discipline we shall divide it into a number of stages, with a view to elucidating the metaphysical ideas that underlie it.

Focusing attention first on the subjective aspect of the training, our discussion at this stage will center around the problem of consciousness, with regard to the ideal state in which it should be maintained and the ideal way in which it should be made to work. Let us begin by remarking that the spiritual training is called in Confucianism the "nurturing of the mind" (*yang hsin*).

The idea of the "nurturing of the mind" has its original source in the *Book of the Mean* (*Chung Yung*), one of the Four Sacred Books of Confucianism, a work attributed to Tzŭ Ssŭ, the grandson of Confucius. In fact not only this particular idea but the whole theory of spiritual training in the Sung dynasty Confucianism is based upon, and derived from the *Chung Yung*.

The *Chung Yung* begins by distinguishing between *wei-fa* and *i-fa*. The *wei-fa* literally means "not-yet-actuated" and the *i-fa* "already-actuated." The former term refers to the mind in the state of absolute equilibrium before it is aroused. In its negative aspect it is a point of stillness in the consciousness, where there is absolutely no movement observable. Calm and clean, it is like a well-polished mirror reflecting as yet no image of anything whatsoever. It is, so to speak, the innermost zero-point of consciousness. The first stage of the "nurturing of the mind" consists in intensely concentrating the entire force of consciousness upon its zero-point, keeping away from

the consciousness all the stirrings of feelings, emotions and thoughts, and holding the mind back from going out of itself in pursuit of external objects.

There is, however, a positive aspect also to the *wei-fa*. Since it is calm, clean and undisturbed like a well-polished mirror, the mind is now ready to reflect anything that appears before it, as the thing, whatever it might be, really is. Furthermore it enables the mind to become aware of itself as the initial source from which all its movements arise. As one, by dint of the "nurturing of the mind," establishes within himself the zero-point of consciousness, one can observe calmly, without being immoderately excited, myriads of feelings and emotions surging up out of the source and gradually radiating toward the peripheral regions of consciousness.

The *wei-fa* or the "not-yet-actuated" state of the mind in this double aspect, namely, in its absolute stillness and tranquility on the one hand and the infinite capacity to start working rightly and correctly on the other, is called *wei-fa chih chung*, i.e., the "equilibrium of the not-yet-actuated."

When the *wei-fa* gets really actuated, the mind is in the state of *i-fa* or the "already-actuated." It is the view of the author of the *Chung Yung*, and consequently of all the Confucian philosophers of the Sung dynasty, that the feelings, thoughts and actions issuing forth from the well-established zero-point of consciousness are all, without a single exception, right and correct.

For an exact understanding or estimation of Confucian philosophy as a whole, it is of utmost importance to observe that in the view of the representative thinkers of this school, the basic structure just described of the mind is completely identical with the structure of the cosmos. This should not be taken simply to mean that the two in their view are of a similar nature or similar structure with one another. Rather, the mind and the cosmos are one and the same thing, there being no ontological discrepancy between them.

As there is in the depths of human consciousness a psychological zero-point to be reached through intensive concentration of the

mind, through a process of gradual stilling of all agitations and stirrings, so there is, according to the Confucian philosophers, in the unseen depths of being, a cosmic zero-point to which all the phenomenal motions, changes and transformations ultimately return as their common, universal source. And these two zero-points, one internal and the other external, are in reality one and the same thing which is designated in the *I Ching* by the word *t'ai chi* or the supreme Principle of Being. It is of the nature of the mind to be constantly in action in the form of feelings, emotions and thoughts surging up from the zero-point of consciousness; likewise from the eternally motionless zero-point of the cosmos there arise first two cosmic forces, *yin* and *yang*, and then through their interactions myriads of things and events. And these two kinds of motion, one internal and the other external, are ultimately one and the same motion, i.e., the same metaphysico-physical evolvement of being out of its primordial source.

Stated more concretely, the mind or human consciousness never ceases to contract and diffuse, passing from the *wei-fa* to *i-fa* and from *i-fa* to *wei-fa* interminably. This exactly corresponds to the constant and never-ceasing and never-ceasing alternation of contraction and diffusion which is endlessly carried on in the universe through the mutual succession of the *yin*-force and *yang*-force. According to the Confucian philosophers, these two processes of contraction and diffusion, one interior and the other exterior, are exactly of the same structure and are one and the same process. For both are the same process by which the supreme Principle of Being (*t'ai chi*) manifests itself in its own sphere which comprises both the interior and the exterior world. As Shao Yung (1011–1077) remarks:[10] "The Way is the supreme Principle of Being" and also "the Mind is the supreme Principle of Being."

The mind which in an ordinary situation is nothing more than the individual, individualized locus of consciousness of an individual

[10] *I Ch'uan Chi Jang Chi*, IV and V.

person, must here be understood as the Cosmic Mind. As the Mind moves, the whole universe comes into being.

Shao Yung, let it be remarked in passing, was a remarkable Confucian thinker in the Sung dynasty, who undertook to explain the historical evolvement of the universe in terms of numbers. He was also a true mystic who lived his whole life with a unshakable conviction based on his own spiritual experiences that the rhythm of his mind was in harmony with the rhythm of the universe and that his mind was completely at one with Heaven and Earth. Prompted by this experience of the cosmic unity, he made a number of utterances which are of special relevance to our present topic. He says, for example: "Toying with the supreme Principle of Being (i.e., completely at one with the *t'ai chî*) calmly I come and go (between *yin* and *yang*)," or "As I calmly come and go, between the Root of Heaven (i.e., *yang*) and the Hole of the Moon (i.e., *yin*), the whole universe rejoices in its springtide." And in one of his widely known poems he gives a most outspoken expression to the Confucian view of the cosmic nature of the Mind. The poem reads:[11]

> The body is born after Heaven and Earth.
> But the mind precedes Heaven and Earth.
> From Me issue forth Heaven and Earth.
> What else is there for me to say?

As in many other forms of Oriental thought, the word "mind" (*hsin*) in Confucianism in its metaphysical sense must be understood in this way. And it is because the "mind" is to be taken (or actually experienced) as something of this nature that Confucianism demands that one should undergo a special spiritual training in order to attain a special spiritual experience which we might for the sake of convenience call enlightenment or illumination and which the philosophers of this school designate by the phrase: "sudden breakthrough." For otherwise the mind will always remain an individual mind

[11] *Ibid*, XIX, quoted by Chu-tzŭ in his Introduction to the *I Ching* (*I Hsüeh Ch'i Mêng*).

standing against the objective, external world.

Referring to this point Chu-tzŭ remarks:[12] "Suddenly in the dead of night, there bursts out a roaring sound of thunder (i.e., after a long, assiduous self-discipline, all of a sudden the darkness of consciousness is dissipated by the experience of "breakthrough"). On the spot tens and hundreds of thousands of doors are opened up (i.e., one perceives an infinite number of things issuing forth out of the zero-point of the mind). If one comes to realize that the mind which is no-mind (i.e., the *wei-fa*) contains in itself all the visible things (i.e., the entire phenomenal world in the state of *i-fa*), one may well be said to be standing face to face with the originator himself of the *I Ching*."

Our next problem is now to know what is the philosophical content of this illumination-experience and what in concrete terms is the method cultivated by the Confucian philosophers for attaining this experience.

In discussing this problem we must not forget that the mind, at its zero-point, or in the state of *wei-fa*, be it subjective and individual or cosmic and absolute, is in the a-temporal dimension of reality, while in the state of *i-fa*, it is in the temporal dimension.[13] This would naturally imply that trying to attain the zero-point of the mind

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[12] *Chu-tzŭ Wen Chi*, XXXVIII. The original is a four verse poem.

[13] In this and the following section, the state of *wei-fa* is directly identified with the "zero-point" or the *t'ai chi* (supreme Principle of Being). This may be said to be the most representative idea shared by the majority of the early Confucian philosophers, except that Chu-tzŭ in the years of philosophical maturity (after the age of forty) held on this problem a somewhat modified view, according to which, the *wei-fa* as the contracted state of consciousness, and the *i-fa* as the diffused or expanded state of consciousness, stand on the same level, i.e., in the physical and temporal dimension of the mind, and the *t'ai chi* is placed beyond these two as the ultimate source of both *wei-fa* and *i-fa*. Correspondingly, on the cosmic level, the *wei-fa* appears as *yin*-force representing rest while the *i-fa* as the *yang*-force represents motion, both being in the physical and temporal dimension of reality and the *t'ai chi* here again is posited as the metaphysical and a-temporal ground of *yin* and *yang*. Under this

through the illumination-experience is trying to start from the temporal dimension until one reaches the a-temporal dimension of things. This is the process of the spiritual discipline which we are going to explain.

III

It will have been made clear by now, at least in a vague and general way, that Confucian metaphysics is a philosophical world-view based on a rigorous spiritual training, and that it is not a product of the human reason in its natural, crude state. For as long as it is left undisciplined in its natural crudeness, the reason will never admit that the mind and the universe are one and the same thing, that the centrifugal and centripetal activity of the mind from *wei-fa* to *i-fa* and back again to *wei-fa* is exactly identical with the ontological effusion and contraction of all things from and to their ultimate metaphysical Ground. In other words, the undisciplined mind is never able to see that the rhythmic movement of the supreme Principle of Being (*t'ai chi*) between the *yin* and *yang* is constantly and eternally going on everywhere, irrespective of whether in the internal sphere of the human mind or the external sphere of the physical universe.

The importance of the human mind in this context is, in the view of the Confucian philosophers, that the locus where this is realized is what we have designated above as the zero-point of consciousness. It is absolutely necessary that one should attain to, and see with his own inner eyes, this zero-point of consciousness, the point of equilibrium and non-motion as the initial point of all movement before one might set out to philosophize on the significance of the unceasing change that is the central fact about the reality. In order to do so, one must of necessity undergo a spiritual training.

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interpretation the *wei-fa* can no longer be considered identical with the "zero-point," whether psychological or cosmic. The "zero-point" or *t'ai chi* is definitely beyond the *wei-fa*, not to speak of *i-fa*.

The spiritual training is carried out in two different, but successive, stages. The first stage is known as the discipline of "quiet sitting" (*ching tso*). It is a special introspective discipline by which one aims at reaching the zero-point of consciousness. At this stage man trains himself, i.e., tries to control his mind, with a view to realizing in himself the state of *wei-fa* in its uncontaminated purity, away from all the disturbing factors coming from the state of *i-fa* in which he usually finds his consciousness. This stage of training purports to actualize the process by which the mind, forcing itself, as it were, to leave the temporal dimension of reality with which it naturally tends to remain complacent, reaches the a-temporal dimension of reality, the point of inner stillness and quietude.

The second stage of the training consists in a rigorously critical examination of all things that are found in the temporal dimension of reality. Being in the temporal dimension, they are in a constant state of flux. These changing things must be examined one after another so that one might find their "essences," i.e., the eternally unchanging and unchangeable archetypes under the surface of incessant changes and transformations. Otherwise expressed, the second stage of the spiritual training consists in one's trying to find the metaphysical *wei-fa* in the midst of the *i-fa*. This can only be achieved when one succeeds in totally transcending the ontological dimension in which reality is seen in the state of temporal evolvement. One will find himself then in the a-temporal dimension of reality in which all things are seen reduced to one single point, their metaphysical zero-point.

The shift from the temporal to the a-temporal dimension of things comes to man abruptly and unexpectedly, like lightening, in the form of a sudden self-realization. It usually occurs after a more or less long period of assiduous discipline during which the disciple is to examine one by one the existent things in the world with a relentless concentration of the mind. When the shift actually occurs, that is the moment of enlightenment in the Confucian sense, i.e., the "sudden breakthrough" (*t'o jan kuan t'ung*).

In what follows we are going into more details about these two stages of the spiritual training which we have just sketched.

IV
Quiet Sitting (*ching tso*)

"Quiet sitting" is the first stage of the spiritual training in the Confucianism of the Sung dynasty. What is aimed at in this phase of the training is the realization within one's own self of the "equilibrium of the state of *wei-fa*" (*wei-fa chih chung*). Quiet sitting is a concrete method specifically cultivated for this purpose. It is concerned first and foremost with the pure inwardness of man. Most of the Confucian philosophers emphasize the importance of this method.

Before entering upon the theoretical treatment of this problem, let me first quote here a famous anecdote which has been handed down to us concerning quiet sitting. The anecdote runs as follows:[14]

> One day two disciples of Ch'êng I Ch'uan came to see I Ch'uan. They found him quietly sitting with his eyes closed. The two disciples did not leave, but remained there standing.
> After a long while he opened his eyes and became aware of their presence. "Oh," he said, "you are still there! The night is already falling. You had better go home."
> When the two disciples went out of the gate, they noticed that the snow lay on the ground one foot deep.

The elder brother[15] of I Ch'uan was also known for the practice of quiet sitting. Of him it is said that "when Ming Tao sat in meditation, he looked like a doll made of clay."[16]

The quiet sitting of this sort is possible, according to the Confucian philosophers, only on the basis of the inner realization of the zero-point of consciousness as the ultimate source of *yin* and *yang*. As

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[14] *I Lo Yüan Lu*, IV.
[15] Ch'êng Ming Tao.
[16] *Chin Ssŭ Lu* (*op. cit.*), XIV, 21.

Chu-tzŭ remarks[17] in the biography he wrote of his own teacher, Li Yen P'ing (1093–1163) who first introduced him in his youth into the discipline of quiet sitting: "Master Li, whenever he had free time, used to sit upright all day long, examining minutely the state of consciousness before the birth (*wei-fa*) of the emotions of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, in search of what is known as the state of equilibrium (*chung*). Through a sustained effort in this self-discipline, he came to realize that the very Root of the universe lies precisely in this state." This is to say that the practice of quiet sitting made Li Yen P'ing realize that the primordial Root of consciousness is itself the primordial Root of the Universe.

It needs hardly be pointed out that the discipline of quiet sitting, as a form of meditation or concentration of the mind and getting rid of its wild stirrings, comes perilously close, at least in some of its aspects, to the practice of *zazen* in Zen Buddhism. The Confucian philosophers were keenly aware of this. They were aware of the danger of their practice of quiet sitting being confused with the *zazen* of Zen Buddhism.

As interpreted by the Confucian philosophers, *zazen* consists in the stopping of thought-waves. It is a technique of spiritual training inducing the mind into the state of ecstatic unconsciousness. The quiet sitting is superficially similar to, but fundamentally different from such a discipline. Says Chu-tzŭ:[18]

> The quiet sitting does not aim at stopping all conscious thought. In this respect it is different from *zazen*-meditation. The quiet sitting consists in intensely concentrating the mind, allowing no futile and useless thinking to arise. This keeps the mind cool and serene so that it remains completely unified.

Not trying to stop all conscious thought, but simply allowing no futile thought to be stirred up in the mind — this principle implies, on its positive side, that the mind should be kept always

[17] *Chu-tzŭ Wen Chi* (*op. cit.*), XCVII.
[18] *Chu-tzŭ Yü Lei*, XII.

active and mobile in strict accordance with the course of the interchange of *yin* and *yang*. On this point Chu-tzŭ makes the following remark:[19]

> The mind is not a dead thing. It is a living thing. Only when the mind is kept really alive, is it able to act in the correct and right way whenever it responds to a matter or encounters a thing. If one confines himself to the effort of detaining the mind so that it may not run outward, (the mind becomes a dead thing); one would thereby be practicing nothing other than the *zazen*-discipline of Buddhism. In such a case, the mind is not able to act freely and smoothly in response to whatever appears suddenly before it.

Again:[20]

> The mind is a living thing. If only it moves when it should move and rest when it should rest, thus not losing sight of the right time for motion or rest, its path will be bright and illumined.

To move when it should move and to keep still when it should keep still — this is one of the key-ideas that determine the quiet sitting over against the Buddhist practice of *zazen*, at least in the view of the Confucian philosophers themselves.

Rest or stillness (*ching*), however does not mean a negative state in which the mind is kept absolutely fixed and immovable. Confucianism relegates the absolute fixity of the mind to Buddhism, and holds that this is exactly the concept expressed by the technical term *ting* which plays an exceedingly important role in Buddhism. *Ching*, on the contrary, means the mind moving in the midst of rest, the mind which moves as it should in everyday encounter with things in strict accordance with their proper norms.

Asked by someone: "Is it not possible for us to search for rest in the very midst of motion?" Ch'êng I Ch'uan answers:[21] "Yes, it is indeed possible, but it is also very difficult to actualize. Buddhism

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[19] *Ibid.*, LIX.
[20] *Chu-tzŭ Wen Chi* (*op. cit.*), XXXIV.
[21] *Erh Ch'êng I Shu.*

often talks about *ting* (which is the negative attitude of the subject never to leave the state of rest and motionlessness). The Confucian sages admonish *chih* (which is to keep still and move, never leaving the right place in either case).

As Ch'êng Ming Tao asserts,[22] it is inevitable, as long as there are external things, that the mind be stirred up. The external things are not of an illusory nature, as they are held to be in Buddhism. The important point is rather that the mind, when it is stirred up and moves, moves in the right way, that is, in accord with the eternal law of which each thing is a concrete manifestation. Nor is it, according to Ming Tao, right that one should withdraw himself into an inner confinement, and hold fast to the principle of non-action (*wu-wei*) — as is done by the Taoist — in order to stabilize his interior. Taoism upholds the principle of "action through non-action." Against this Confucianism upholds the principle of "non-action through (or throughout) action."

Following some indications given by the main text of the *I Ching* concerning hexagram LII, *Kên*, Ch'êng Ming Tao urges us to go a step further and realize that the fundamental mistake lies in the very distinction ordinarily made between the interior and exterior. For it is ultimately this distinction that impedes the actualization of the principle of "non-action throughout action." He says:[23]

> Rather than rejecting the exterior with the thought that the interior alone is good and important, it is far better to forget both the interior and exterior. Both having been completely forgotten, the mind is pure, serene and unoccupied. If the mind is occupied by nothing, it is stabilized. If it is stabilized, it is luminous. If it is luminous, it is not at all perturbed by being encountered by things and responding to them.

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[22] *Ming Tao Wen Chi*, III, given also in the *Chin Ssŭ Lu*, II, 4. This is a famous passage known as the "Epistle on the Stabilization of the Mind," written in answer to a question raised by Chang Hêng Ch'ü concerning how to calm down and stabilize the stirring mind.

[23] *Erh Ch'êng I Shu* (*op. cit.*), III, quoted in the *Chin Ssŭ Lu*, IV, 25.

As long as one sticks to the distinction between the interior and exterior, one either will ultimately fall into the Taoist "non-action" by dint of the very effort not to let one's mind be disturbed by the external things, or is forced to look for a place where there are no external things. The first alternative, according to the Confucian view, is a mistake, while the second alternative is obviously vain. Moreover both are unnatural. The Confucian ideal is, on the contrary, that one should maintain himself in the state of "positive action" (*yu-wei*) and that the actions done in the dimension of *yu-wei* itself, i.e., in the midst of ordinary circumstances of human life, should be directly and naturally in perfect accord with the working of the Heavenly Law. The human mind then will be completely at one with the Mind of Heaven and Earth. For a mind in such a state there is no interior to be distinguished from the exterior. The I and the Other are unified.

The much-discussed judgment-words of the *I Ching* on the hexagram LII are interpreted by Ch'êng Ming Tao in this sense. The text of the *I Ching* in question reads:

> Remaining still with one's own back, one is not aware of one's body.
> One goes into the courtyard, but one does not see the persons therein.

The backbone, or vertebral column is of all parts of the body the most stabilized. The judgment-words, according to Ming Tao, mean that, resting still upon the permanent stability of the mind, one is not perturbed by the so-called external things even when one steps into the field of ordinary human relationships to act there. For in such a state, as Ming Tao continues to say:

> The mind is infinitely open. Things come, and the mind freely goes on responding to them.

The discipline of quiet sitting is characterized by another, perhaps more important, feature. It is more important because it is more typically Confucian. The reference is to one of the key-concepts of Confucianism, *ching* which may be translated as "reverence," "profound respectfulness," or "being solemn and serious." The attitude,

both bodily and mental, of one who submits himself to the discipline of quiet sitting must first and foremost be devout respectfulness.

Ch'êng I Ch'uan greatly emphasized the importance of *ching* as the central point in the spiritual training of the Ch'êng school saying that "*ching* is the best means by which to enter into the Way." He simply defined it as the attitude of "giving supremacy to one," and explained the word "one" as making the mind completely unified or not allowing the mind to prowl about. Under this interpretation, *ching* means primarily the self-discipline of man by which he guards his mind against dispersion, keeping it rigorously concentrated — concentrated on that which we have heretofore referred to by the phrase "the zero-point of consciousness."

Even when such strong emotions as anger and joy surge up in the mind, they all will "hit the right measure" and stay at the right place if only one does not lose sight of the zero-point of consciousness. For, as we have seen above, the zero-point of consciousness, according to the Confucian philosophers, is directly connected with the zero-point of the universe. Consequently, by concentrating the mental energy upon the former in such a way that it might not be concealed by the stirrings of the mind, one is assuming *ipso facto* an attitude of devout reverence toward the supreme Principle of Heaven and Earth.

What kind of attitude, then, is *ching* in more concrete terms? The answer to this question will clarify the peculiarly Confucian coloring of this concept. The answer is found in what Yin Yen Ming (1071–1142), a disciple of Ch'êng I Ch'uan remarked[24] by way of explicating what I Ch'uan meant by *ching* when he said that this word means "giving supremacy to one."

> *Ching* has no definitely fixed form. The main thing is that one should keep his mind and body braced up.
> This is no other than what Master Ch'êng meant by "giving supremacy to one." It is exemplified by the devoutly reverent attitude of the mind

[24] *Chin Ssŭ Lu*, IV, 44, Note.

and body, which one assumes when one prostrates himself at a shrine. In such a situation the mind and body become naturally braced up. There is nothing more to be added to it.

Without being forced from outside, we naturally tend to feel awe-struck in front of a sacred object in a sacred place. The sense of awe and reverence tightens both our mind and body into a peculiar state of spiritual oneness. The Confucian philosophers emphasize the naturalness of this state; it is not an artificially induced contraction of the mind and body.

Ching, originally meaning the attitude of respectfulness and austerity, thus appears here with a marked coloring of Confucian devotion. It is *ching* as understood in this sense that should be maintained as the basis of the discipline of quiet sitting. *Ching*, however, must not be exclusively confined to quiet sitting. It must be extended in all directions so that it might cover the whole field of man's life. As Ch'êng I Ch'uan says,[25] whether being engaged in the discipline of sitting or doing something in the ordinary circumstances of daily life, man must maintain the attitude of devout reverence, unifying the mind through sustained concentration on the primordial purity which is found in its deepest dimension. And it is only by unremittingly practicing *ching* everywhere and at every moment of life that man can bring the discipline of quiet sitting to perfection.

Someone asked I Ch'uan: "At the time of relaxation, is it all right to leave the body loose and without strain on condition that the mind alone be kept alert and tense?" I Ch'uan answered: "Is it at all possible for us to sit with two legs stretched out without the mind becoming dull and lacking seriousness?"[26]

Beginning, thus, with the rectification of the external appearance of the body, one is urged to go further and discipline oneself to keep one's mind constantly in the state of austerity and respectfulness, so

[25] *Erh Ch'êng I Shu* (*op. cit.*), XV.

[26] *Erh Ch'êng I Shu* (*op. cit.*), XVIII, reproduced by Chu-tzŭ in his *Chin Ssŭ Lu*, IV, 51.

that the mind ends up by being perfectly stabilized. The final result of the discipline is described by Ch'êng I Ch'uan as follows:[27]

> As the mind firmly settles down in the state of being one, it no longer goes either to the east nor to the west, but remains constantly in its "equilibrium" (*chung*). Since it does not run about hither and thither, it is perfectly stabilized and remains in itself.
> Then the Heavenly Law itself becomes manifest to it.

It will be clear by now that the "stabilization" here in question is not the same as being rigidly fixed or absolute immobility. Just the reverse; the "stabilized" mind is widely open to all things, whether they be (so-called) external things or (so-called) internal states. Outside, things and events are perceived. Inside, feelings, emotions and thoughts are incessantly arising one after another. The mind does not remain aloof to them. It responds to them. And yet the fundamental unity of the mind is never perturbed. Such is the typically Confucian concept of quietness.

V
Critical Investigation of Things

A thorough, critical investigation of things constitutes the second stage of the spiritual training in Confucianism. Like its first stage, the quiet sitting, which we have just dealt with, the second stage of the training also involves a rigorous concentration of the mind. However, the nature of concentration is conspicuously different in the two cases. In the former, the concentration was primarily subjective in the sense that it consisted in the sustained contemplation of one's own mental processes and states, leading ultimately to an immediate apprehension of the metaphysical Ground of consciousness. Naturally the mental function mobilized for this purpose was in the main intuition. The analytic of the reason was intentionally suspended as an obstacle to the unification of the mind.

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[27] *Erh Ch'êng I Shu* (*op. cit.*), XVIII.

In the latter, on the contrary, the concentration is of an objective nature in the sense that it is focused upon the things and their interrelations as they are found in the empirical dimension of human experience. Of all the mental functions it is that of reflective, analytic thinking that is mobilized. Extroversion, not introversion, is what characterizes the second stage of the training.

The important point to be noticed is that the first stage of the spiritual discipline, quiet sitting, centers around the *wei-fa*, whereas the second stage, the investigation of things, is primarily concerned with the *i-fa*. The primary aim of the quiet sitting is the realization of pure subjectivity in one's self, the subjectivity whose absolute purity will never be perturbed no matter what may appear before the mind. The investigation of things, on the contrary, consists first and foremost in exercising the reflective function of the mind for the purpose of a thorough investigation of the objective world in its essential structure; it is a rational or intellectual penetration into the data of experience with a view to cognizing the "essences" of things.

Naturally, in this phase of the discipline, the *i-fa* is given the central position. The reflective intellect which has been kept out of operation in the quiet sitting, is now allowed to have full swing. All the things and their relations are subjected to a careful examination one by one so that each of them might disclose its essential constitution.

From the viewpoint of Confucianism, Buddhism is — and so also is Taoism — characterized by a total neglect of the intellectual investigation of things as an important part of spiritual discipline. Buddhism tends to look upon the activity of the intellect and reason as a hindrance to the self-realization of man. Rejecting outright the thinking power of reason, Buddhism makes a headlong rush toward the metaphysical Void lying beyond the world of relative things and ordinary human relationships. In the eyes of the Confucian philosophers, this is the gravest defect of Buddhism, for as long as one sticks to such a position one is naturally unable to deal properly and correctly with the actual situations in which one finds himself in life. Buddhism necessarily remains at a loss in the presence of the actual

problems of human existence. Buddhism does not know the *i-fa*. Not knowing the *i-fa* in its concrete reality with all its ramifications, it does not know the reality of *wei-fa* either.

The investigation of things is thus a critical examination of the *i-fa*. But the examination of the *i-fa* cannot be carried out in complete detachment from the *wei-fa*. The very distinction between the *i-fa* and *wei-fa* is but a theoretical one. The two cannot subsist independently of each other. Quite the contrary; they are so intimately connected with one another that they are ultimately to be considered one and the same. They are but two different aspects of one single reality, the *i-fa* being its physical or sensible aspect and the *wei-fa* its non-sensible aspect. But being non-sensible should not be mistaken for being non-existent. The relation between these two aspects is explained by Chu-tzŭ in the following way.[28]

The *i-fa* is an undeniable actuality. Rather, it exhausts the whole actuality of existence. In vain shall we seek after something more actual beside or beyond it. How, then, should we consider what the Confucian sages of old have talked about as the "equilibrium of *wei-fa*" or the "absolutely changeless"? Shall we posit it as something beyond consciousness? But, Chu-tzŭ says, anything absolutely unconscious cannot function as the source of the sensible world.

The "equilibrium of *wei-fa*," he says, must not be imagined as an absolute entity or substance lying somewhere beyond the *i-fa*. The *wei-fa* has its existence solely as that which remains eternally the same in the midst of the world of *i-fa*, manifesting itself in the ever-changing things that incessantly appear and disappear. The *wei-fa* is nothing but the hidden, invisible aspect of the very *i-fa*. It is an undivided, allcomprehensive whole which, though remaining in itself forever undifferentiated, makes itself felt everywhere and at every moment in myriads of different forms.

> Throughout the normal course of existence, the undifferentiated whole never ceases to flow on like a river, and never stops to circulate like the

[28] *Chu-tzŭ Wen Chi* (*op. cit.*), XXX–XXXI.

interminable cyclic movement of Heaven. There is thus no discrepancy, even of a hair's breadth, between the essence and its manifestation, the fine and the coarse, stillness and movement, and the root and branch. Birds flying and fishes leaping up — the world is everywhere brightly alive.

This world of ours in which we actually live is the only reality. It is a world filled with life, a world pervaded by the creative energy of Heaven which, never ceasing to flow, brings into being an infinite number of things one after another. The visible side of this world is the *i-fa*, and its reverse side, which is hidden from sight, is the *wei-fa*. The *wei-fa* is the metaphysical "source" from which "wells up the water of life" bringing into being the whole world of physical things. In the philosophic terminology of Confucianism the *wei-fa* thus understood, i.e., as the ultimate metaphysical Source of the physical things or as the supreme Principle of Being underlying the structure and evolvement of the *i-fa*, is called *li*.

The extraordinary importance of this technical term *li* may be guessed from the fact alone that the entire philosophy of the Sung dynasty Confucianism is known as the "science of *li*" (*li hsüeh*).

The word *li* originally meant the streaks naturally engraved on the surface of stone like marble, jade, etc., the natural grain of the stone. Hence it has come to mean the inherent articulations of a thing, representing its primordial constitution. In philosophy it is used in the sense of the principle governing a thing, the unchangeable law, *nomos* or *logos*. It is an immaterial cosmic force which is always found embodied in each one of the material things as its ontological core, as its rationale, the ultimate principle of its intelligibility. Every individual thing in the world has its own *li*, i.e., the ultimate explanatory principle of its own.

Li stands opposed to *ch'i*. *Ch'i* is the principle governing the physical world. It is the all-comprehensive ethereal stuff of which all material things are composed. At the same time it is the immediate source of the vital energy that runs through the physical world. *Ch'i* makes itself manifest in the form of a cosmic tension and interaction

between *yin* and *yang*.

As long as we remain confined to the world of empirical experience, that which has a form, that which appeals to our senses is the sole reality. The Confucian philosophers, however, take the position that the sensible is only one aspect of the reality, and that at the back of the sensible aspect there is clearly recognizable something non-sensible which is nothing other than the non-sensible aspect of the same reality. The latter is normally inaccessible to the mind. Hence the necessity of the spiritual training called the "investigation of things" or "inquiry into *li*" (*ch'iung li*). But even without training, man sometimes encounters cases in which the non-sensible manifests itself with an unusual and undeniable clarity. This point is explained by Ch'êng I Ch'uan through an interesting example in the following way:[29]

> Man tends to consider clear and manifest only those things that are visible and audible, regarding as hidden and obscure what does not directly appeal to the sense-organs. But is it not rather the case that in a certain sense the non-sensible *li* is the most manifest?
> Once a man was playing the harp, when all of a sudden, he noticed a mantis about to jump upon a cicada. At that precise moment, those who were listening became aware, in the flow of the music, of an undeniable presence of murderous intent.
> The killing of an insect by another insect was directly reflected in the mind of the player, and on the spot the audience became vividly aware of it. Could there be anything more manifest than this?

The existence of *li* is manifest just in such a way. Thus *li* as conceived by the Confucian thinkers has two different aspects. On one hand, it is "dark, obscure, and hidden," but, on the other, it is manifest. In Confucian metaphysics, *li* in its self-concealing aspect is technically called the "supreme Principle of Non-Being" (*wu chi*), while the same *li* in its self-manifesting aspect the "supreme Principle of Being"

[29] *I Ch'uan Wen Chi*, IX.

(*t'ai chi*). But even in this latter aspect, *li* manifests itself only in the dimension of *ch'i*, under the form of material things in a constant state of flux that go to constitute the physical world. What is directly manifest is here the ever-changing material things, while *li* as their eternally changeless Principle remains hidden behind the veil of the physical world.

The relation between *li* and its particulars — not to be confused with a whole divided into its parts — is explained by I Ch'uan[30] by a metaphor of the moon variously reflected in different bodies of water. The moon in the sky is one, he says, but its reflections are infinitely many and different — the moon reflected in the great ocean, a violet stream, a basin, a small cup, etc.... The moon reflected in muddy water is invisible although it is really there.

It is to be remarked that the majority of the physical things with regard to the immanent *li* are comparable to the muddy water which, while reflecting the moon, conceals it from our sight. But, whether visible or invisible, *li* is present in every one of the physical things. *Li* is here understood as the metaphysical Ground which, lying hidden behind the sensible surface of every phenomenon, ontologically founds it and morally justifies it.

As has been made clear by the preceding, *li* or the supreme Principle of Being exists in two different dimensions with regard to the physical world. On the one hand it exists as the metaphysical Ground of all things, unique, absolute and universal. On the other hand, it exists, particularized, at the core of every one of the things as its ontological and moral ground. As Chu-tzŭ says:[31] "Gathered up, all things are unified in the one supreme Principle of Being. Separated from one another, every one of them has each its own supreme Principle of Being."

And this observation brings us back to the original point with

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[30] *I Ch'uan Wen Chi* (*op. cit.*), IX.
[31] *T'ai Chi T'u Shuo Chieh.*

which we opened this section, namely, the nature of the "investigation of things" or "inquiry into *li*" as the second stage of the spiritual training in Confucianism.

It is precisely to the particularized aspect of the supreme Principle of Being that the "inquiry into *li*" is to be directed. In other words, *li* which is to be set up as the object of reflective cognition is not *li* in the universal and metaphysical dimension of existence; but it is *li* in the physical dimension, existing in the capacity of the ontological-moral core of each individual thing. This is the primary objective of the "investigation of things."

It will be clear that the "investigation" definitely marks off Confucianism from Zen Buddhism with regard to the method of spiritual training. The *zazen*-discipline is based on the obliteration of the distinction between subject and object. The Confucian "investigation" rests on this very distinction. Of course, as long as the mind remains in the state of *wei-fa*, there is neither subject nor object. But as soon as it gets into the state of *i-fa*, the two terms of cognition become established. The subject of cognition is here the rational mind and the object of cognition is the particularized *li* in every one of the things in this world. Says Chu-tzŭ:[32]

> The cognition is the reflective activity of the mind, while *li* is the *li* of the things. The latter is cognized by the former. There is thus naturally a clear distinction between subject and object.

More generally speaking, Zen lacks a thoroughgoing inquiry into the proper articulation of things, laws and norms of things in the dimension of ordinary human existence in which man and man, man and thing are related to each other in thousands of different ways. Rejecting outright the use of the reflective mind, Zen knows nothing of the moral norms regulating human relationships and the physical laws governing the course of Heaven and Earth. "Even those," Chu-tzŭ says, "who claim to have attained enlightenment are

[32] *Chu-tzŭ Wen Chi* (*op. cit.*), XLIV.

completely ignorant of these matters. How then could we consider these people enlightened?"[33]

The "investigation" of Confucianism intends to go in the opposite direction. By activating the reflective function of the mind, it tries to explore the world of things with a view to bringing to light the essence of the things in the very dimension in which they actually exist. In this respect the "investigation" is typically Confucian.

At this point, however, we must make an important observation. The fundamental attitude of the Confucian "investigation" must not be confused with that of the natural sciences. The latter survey the world of things objectively, with an impersonal detachment. Confucianism, on the contrary, is not interested in a purely objective study of things. It is not interested in studying things as physical or material entities. Its concern is with the things as they are inextricably bound to human interest, human existence, human purposes and consequences. Thus to give a few examples[34] a bamboo chair has its *li* in its having four legs (so that it might stand stably on the ground) and its being suitable for sitting on. A writing brush has its *li* not only in its being made of bamboo and hair but also in that man can write characters with it. A boat cannot go on land; it can sail only on water. That is the essential part of the *li* of the boat. A cart, on the contrary, can go only on land, and that is the essential part, if not the whole, of its *li*.

Examples may be multiplied indefinitely. But enough, I think, has been given to show that the "thing" whose *li* is to be investigated is not a physical or material thing in its pure objectivity existing irrespectively of the needs and interests of man, but that it is always a thing as intimately related to human life. *Li* thus comprises in itself the factor of human action and reaction. *Li* in each case is investigated with regard to the particular mode of being in which a thing stands in the closest relation to man in the actual texture of his

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[33] *Ibid.*, XXX.

[34] *Chu-tzŭ Yü Lei* (*op. cit.*), IX.

existence. What a thing should necessarily be in such a situation — that is its *li*. This is the reason why Confucian philosophy has often been criticized for confusing *Sein* with *Sollen*. But this is precisely another marked feature which characterizes Confucianism and distinguishes it from the other spiritual traditions of the East.

All that has just been discussed, however, does not exhaust the whole range of the "investigation." It is only the first half of it. The spiritual training must go ahead to its second half which alone brings it to completion. The second half of the way culminates in a sort of enlightenment or illumination-experience which is actualized by a shift of dimensions on the part of man, namely, a sudden, decisive shift from the physical to the metaphysical dimension of *li*. The point of transition from the former to the latter is provided by the very constitution of *li* itself. As we saw above, *li* is of a double-dimension structure. *Li*, as it is found in an individual thing is the law of individual existence peculiar to it; it is that which makes the thing what it ought to be. At the same time, however, it is the ultimate ground of existence which, not being confined to this particular thing, justifies or grounds its existence, as it were, from above; it is the metaphysical principle on which is grounded the just-mentioned law of individual existence; it is that by which the thing cannot be otherwise than what it is.

According to Chu-tzŭ[35] these two aspects together constitute the *li* of each particular thing. The former aspect, i.e., the particularized — and, to that extent, relative — side of *li* is open to the reflective function of the mind. It is analytically studied in the first half of the "investigation." The latter aspect is inaccessible to this function of the mind. However, by exercising the reflective function in a rigorous way through an intensive concentration on the particularized *li* of individual things, the mind is gradually prepared for making a sudden shift from the physical to the metaphysical dimension of reality.

This shift of the mind from the physical to the metaphysical is

[35] *Ta Hsüeh Huo Wên* (*op. cit.*).

made possible, in the view of the Confucian philosophers, by the fact that *li* in these two aspects, universal and particular, is one and the same, and that the mind, on its part, though actually confined in an individual body, is in itself all-comprehensive and infinitely wide so that in the last analysis it is identical with the supreme Principle of all things. "The moon is reflected in ten thousand rivers, but everywhere it is equally round."[36]

Thus, by investigating the individual *li* of individual things, one after another, after much sustained effort, man suddenly becomes "enlightened," that is, the mind suddenly realizes its identity with the absolute *li* of all things. At that moment it is no longer the reflective function of the mind that is at work. The reflective mind has been transformed into pure intuition. This is what is called in Confucianism a "sudden breakthrough" (*t'o jan kuan t'ung*).

As long as the mind keeps working on the level of reflective things, the subject and object are kept apart. The mind is the subject of cognition and *li* is its object. At a certain point in the course of the "investigation of things" on this level, the "breakthrough" occurs, and the distinction between subject and object becomes completely obliterated, and the mind and *li* are realized to be one.[37]

The breakthrough becomes actualizable only after a more or less long period of assiduous effort because the progress of the "investigation of things" is not a horizontal but a vertical process. It is a vertical process in the sense that the mind goes on being deepened step by step. And the continued "investigation" can be a process of the deepening of the mind because instead of being a horizontal widening of the range of knowledge, the "investigation" is a disciplinary process by which the personality is trained step by step to perfection. The Confucian method of "investigation" is not a purely intellectual method of the inductive study of the laws regulating all things.

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[36]A famous metaphor devised by Ch'ên Mo T'ang, a disciple of Yang Kuei Shan (1053–1135) of the Ch'êng school.

[37]Chu-tzŭ: *Ta Hsüeh Huo Wên* (*op. cit.*).

Rather it is a study of things in the midst of moral life, as they relate most intimately to human existence. Consequently, attaining to the *li* of things one after another means experiencing them ever more deeply. It thereby establishes itself as a process of self-discipline.

For the understanding of this point we must recall that in the view of the Confucian philosophers, *li* is not only in each of the "external" things, but it also exists in the mind, and — more important still — that the *li* of things and the *li* of the mind are ultimately one and the same *li*. The breakthrough of which we spoke a few lines back does not consist in our attaining to the highest and most general *li* through the particular *li* of many things. Rather, it consists in that from behind the complicated network of correspondences between the *li* of the things and the *li* of the mind there finally appears one single *Li* for which there is no distinction between the "thing" and the "mind." It is in short the self-realization of the *Li* itself through man.

Thus the long process of spiritual training has come to the final end. As we remember it now, it started with the discipline of "quiet sitting." The "quiet sitting" is a stage in which contemplative introspection is given full swing, the reflective faculty of the reason being withheld from action. This part of the training ends in the realization of pure, absolute subjectivity. And this is experienced by man as a sort of enlightenment or inner illumination.

Then begins the second stage of the spiritual training, i.e., the "investigation of things," the first part of which is an objective inquiry into the particularized *li* of each individual thing. This part which is the main part of the whole training process, being as it is typically Confucian, is characterized by the activity of the reflective faculty of the mind.

By virtue of a sustained effort over a long period of time, however, the reflective faculty engaged in an intensive inquiry into the *li* of the infinite variety of things becomes gradually refined until finally, somewhere along the line, it is suddenly transformed into a metaphysical faculty. A "sudden breakthrough" occurs, and the *li* of all

things reveals itself as the one absolute metaphysical *Li*. In terms of cognition, it is another kind of enlightenment-experience. And with this the spiritual training completes its whole course.

VI

The very structure of the spiritual training clearly shows that the metaphysical *Li* which is revealed at the end of the "investigation of things" is, taken by itself and considered in itself, nothing other than the a-temporal dimension of reality. It is a realm in which silence and stillness are supreme. There in no movement, no change. The metaphysical *Li* remains eternally the same. Absolutely nothing is observable here. In this respect, the *Li* is called in Confucianism *wu-chi* or the supreme Principle of Non-being.

At the same time, however, this same *Li*, assuming the form of *ch'i*, i.e., an unceasing interchange of *yin* and *yang*, sets off an interminable process of the evolvement of things, which is definitely of a temporal nature. The a-temporal *Li* is the source of the temporal evolvement of the phenomenal world. It is in reference to this point that the metaphysical *Li* is called *t'ai chi* or the supreme Principle of Being. Thus the *Li* is a converging point of the a-temporal and temporal dimensions of reality.

On the other hand, the phenomenal things which are the products of the activity of *yin* and *yang*, are constantly changing. And the constant change and transformation being in the very ontological constitution of these things, they are essentially of a temporal nature. And yet, as we have seen, in each one of the things there is immanent a particularized *li* making the thing what it is. That is to say, the a-temporal is actually active in the midst of the temporal. And in this respect all things, in spite of their being definitely temporal as physical phenomena, are of an a-temporal nature. In this sense, the phenomenal world is also a converging point of the a-temporal and temporal dimensions of reality.

Thus according to the Confucian view, the world is to be

conceived as a metaphysico-physical field in which the temporal and a-temporal come to meet.

VII

At the outset of the present paper we spoke of the fundamental optimism which characterizes the world-view of Confucian philosophy. This optimism was observed to be centering around the temporal nature of the world. We noticed also that "time" was conceived in the concrete form of incessant changes and transformations that inevitably affect everything in the world. Confucian philosophy may broadly be understood as a systematic attempt to give an intellectual interpretation of this fact. And we have in what precedes tried to outline Confucianism from this viewpoint.

It will have been made clear by now why the Confucian philosophers remain so calm and unperturbed before the scene of the universal change from which nothing that exists can escape. The optimistic attitude assumed by the philosophers of this school rests on their philosophical conviction that the temporal contains in itself the a-temporal, or rather that the temporal *is* the a-temporal. The ever-changing world is itself forever-changeless. There is, then, no reason for them to be sad and sorrowful in observing the incessant change of all things.

It is perhaps in such a sense that the famous words uttered by Confucius on the bank of a river, must be understood. The passage in the *Lun Yü* ("Confucian Analects") reads:[38]

> Standing by a river the Master said: "Everything flows on like this, never ceasing, day and night!"

An indescribable sadness tends to sink into the mind as we read these words. Everything that exists passes on like the water of a stream, never stopping even for a moment — toward its end, toward death

[38] *Lun Yü*, IX.

and dispersion. An ordinary man would find here an expression of the impermanence of all things. With sad resignation he would see in these words a symbolic description of the tragedy of existence.

In the general context of the *Lun Yü*, on the contrary, this passage does not suggest the existential feeling of ephemerality and frailty. There it is rather an expression of something positive; it is a precise description of the working of Heaven and Earth. And such an interpretation of the passage reaches its apogee with the Confucian philosophers of the Sung dynasty. Nothing of the impermanence, nothing of the tragic destiny of all things in the world is observable in these words of Confucius. Instead of indicating the frailty or momentariness of existence, these words seem to bear witness to the eternity of existence. They express the joy of existence.

A disciple asked Ch'êng I Ch'uan concerning this passage of the *Lun Yü:* "Is it not correct to understand these words as meaning eternity?" "Yes, indeed," the Master replied, "they are intended to indicate the eternal changelessness of things."[39]

[39] *Ch'êng Shih Wai Shu*, XII. See also *Erh Ch'êng I Shu*, XIX (*Chin Ssŭ Lu*, III, 29).

APPENDIX

REMINISCENCES OF ASCONA

In broad daylight, i.e., in the world of light where all earthly things, manifesting their contours respectively, splendidly rise to the surface, twilight emerges and deepens. Things, losing clear distinctions from one another, become floating and unstable, lose their own original formation, as they mingle and permeate one another, and gradually attempt to return to the primordial chaos. One grows curious about the space of the dusk, that is, the deep area of Being, which expands between the *articulated* world and the *non-articulated* one to which the articulated world attempts to return. The momentary darkness, just before all earthly things are submerged in the cavernous darkness and completely brought to naught, has an inexpressible fascination. It possesses the eternally Gnostic, the mysterious, the mystic and an orientation toward the obscuration of Being.

It is never simple darkness. This darkness has thickness and depth. This highly dense thickness and depth are derived from the multi-dimensionality and the manifold layers of Being itself. Being is fundamentally phenomenal. From the perspective of fundamental phenomenality, one acknowledges that what is no doubt believed to be

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This is an English translation of an excerpt from Toshihiko Izutsu's essay. It was originally written in Japanese as the editor-in-chief's preface to the Japanese translation series of the Eranos Yearbooks, published by Heibon-sha Publishing Co., Japan in 1990.

the whole of "reality" is not indeed the whole of reality but is merely its surface. The surfaces of Being are merely the visible forms of its depth. All phenomena emerge from that which is the "prior-to-phenomena." Entering the "prior-to-phenomena," one has to grasp everything from it.

In short, there is the other side in Being. It is the other side of Being, that is, the deep area of Being. Only in the other side of Being, is there the mystery of Being. In persistent quest of phenomena into the basis of the "prior-to-phenomena," one attempts to take a peep at the mystery of Being. It cannot naturally be an event of broad daylight. For only in the obscurity of "twilight" does Being slightly present its hidden pre-phenomenal and non-articulated forms.

Western culture has often experienced "obscurity," which thus has an ontological significance, at the turn of centuries on all such occasions. Although it has been experienced at the turn of centuries, it is not always a phenomenon peculiar only to the end of centuries. That is, such senses of Being represent the karmic conditions of meaning, which are apt to be articulately evoked at the end of a century.

Moreover, the recognition is originally rather commonplace in the East that the passions for the "other side of Being" in this sense are deeply fitted and woven into the essential structures of such all areas as religion, art, and philosophy. But here, to avoid complicating the argument of our main theme, I for the time being ignore the issue of the spiritual culture in the East. For example, it is no doubt true that Carl Gustav Jung, a founder of the Eranos Conference, had an extraordinary interest in the spiritual traditions of the East, but it would be quite dangerous to explain the ontological and psychological orientations toward the dark depth of Being which appear in Western culture as being solely due to Eastern influences.

In remote ages, together with the end of neo-Platonism, the *fin de siècle* mood of "obscurity" of archaic culture covered Europe. It was the first period when Western cultural history clearly acknowledged

the end of a century as *fin de siècle*. About this, too, I say nothing here.

Let us remain in the more recent period. It was, so to speak, not long ago, when the nineteenth century moved into the twentieth century, that Europe typically experienced the ontological and psychological "obscurity" to which we referred above.

The *mystery* of Being was spoken everywhere, and interest in mysticism at various dimensions was promoted. Scholarship, art, and thought were colored with the strivings toward the "other side of Being." Researches were focused upon the quest of not only the objective and outer reality, but also the inner part of humans, that is, subjective reality and consciousness. Through the depth psychology of Jung and Freud, the depth of human consciousness, which formerly went unnoticed, or which, if noticed, was avoided as a dangerous and prohibited area, was uncovered as the object of daring investigation.

In this connection, as I mentioned before, it is significant that one of the founders of the Eranos Conference was Jung, who dared to penetrate the deep structure of consciousness. It is also noteworthy that another founder of the Eranos Conference was Rudolf Otto, a great scholar of Indian mysticism. We should not forget that those who gathered at the Eranos Conference, conferring with Jung and Otto, were a series of scholars or thinkers who had strong interest in the depth of inner and outer realities in their respective areas. As Henry Corbin bears witness, Gnosticism in the broadest sense was the underlying tone of the Eranos movement. In 1933 when the dark enthusiasm toward the invisible world, which was driven by the *fin de siècle* conditions, was not yet dampened, this purely spiritual movement was born as one of its typical actualizations, centered around two great scholars whom I have just mentioned. Moreover, the characteristic of the so-called *Eranostic gnosis* was submitted not only in the reflective fields peculiar to religionists, historians of religions, metaphysicians and so on, but also as common effects bestriding the above-mentioned fields and such specific fields of great scholars as physics, biology, aesthetics, and mathematics.

And at present, when the twenty-first century is beginning, people are repeating this experience of the depth, with the *same* sense of Being, in the "obscureness" of the *same* twilight. The reason why I especially emphasize the *same* here is that, however great differences there are between the first *fin de siècle,* which was European and partial, and the second one, that is, the present *fin de siècle* which is worldwide and global, both of them are from the viewpoint of cultural-semiotics the manifestations of the same pattern in the mood (Stimmung) of the "darkness" of primordial Being which is evoked with the term of *fin de siècle.* As was mentioned above, when all the things lose the sharpness of mutual lines of division, each of them comes to be floating from the viewpoint of semantic articulation, and with their many-layered complications, the whole begins to disclose one amorphous and thick existence. Then, in such a condition, one could peep into the other side of Being, the hidden area, which does not directly manifest itself onto its surface, whatever the situation of the surface of Being is.

One of the most noteworthy characteristics in regard to the motive powers which have been activating the spirit and work of Eranos Conference is that, as I mentioned above, Eranos played the role of the cultural-semiotic band structure of combining, in some strange way, the end of the nineteenth century and that of the twentieth.

As if it betrayed the ardent desires and expectations of its supporters, the end of Eranos was suddenly declared formally in summer, 1988. What was the intent of this declaration?

It continued from the beginning to the end for about half a century. But even though the Eranos *conference* ended, the Eranos *spirit* has not ended. It is really alive even now and will probably continue to live hereafter, too. Rather, it will continue to live even greater and even stronger, so long as the passion toward the different dimensions of Being, the invisible dimensions, continues burning in the hearts of people. It will do so as long as people have the spirit of inquiry for

the deep area of their existences.

In any case, what kind of place was Eranos? Or concretely, what kind of people's gathering was it? Now, let me briefly depict, though roughly, the topos of Eranos, which is viewed from the geographical perspective and from the historical perspective of spiritual culture, including its personal concerns with myself.

The canton of Ticino extends along the mysterious Lake Maggiore (Lago Maggiore), and is located directly under the towering precipitous cliffs of the peaks of the Alps, in Switzerland of Italian side. This area, which gives us impression of the fruitfulness of the rough red wine (Ticino Wine), an indigenous product of this district, is a place well-known for long all over Europe, centering with famous Monte Verita, as a base of intense, sometimes radical, spiritual movements. There is Ascona, a beautiful small city with a medieval atmosphere, near the finest tip of the lake at the end away from Italy. On the shore of Lake Maggiore, located in a nook by Ascona, is the place of the Eranos Conference. The term "eranos" (ἔρανος) means a specific kind of "dining together" in classical Greek. It is a noble and elegant gathering, loved by the Greeks, in which some participants share food mutually, brought respectively according to their own tastes, and enjoy talking, dining at the same table. The Eranos Conference in the twentieth century reproduced the form and spirit of this traditional gathering.

In the end of August every year, about ten scholars or thinkers, with the same aim, most of whom gathered with their wives, stayed under the same roof for ten days. The gathering was centered on a round table made from a big stone, which was called "table ronde" at Eranos and which was placed on the plateau overlooking the surface of the lake. During this period, they presented the results of research and reflection at the special meeting place, which they prepared for in their own respective special fields. The content of their speeches was totally unrestricted, so long as it did not deviate very much from the sphere of the common theme each year. Since the lecture hall,

built at the same range of the house where there is the "table ronde," was located at the shore of the lake, the audience listened to the words of lecturers, with the sound of waves lapping the shore as background music.

Every year, the audience consisted of about four hundred people from various European countries. Since the official languages of a lecture were limited to one of three languages — English, French, and German — most of those who came to listen to the lectures understood either all three languages or at least two of them. As one could acknowledge from this fact, they were considerably high intellectuals; there were not only scholars, students, university professors, but also worldly famous atomic physicians, mathematicians, aestheticians, painters, and musicians. Moreover, the audience included descendants of Marie Antoinette, the former Hapusburg Family and such noblewomen as a certain countess. On Sunday around the middle of the period of the conference, a chamber concert was held after dinner by some of the best musicians in Budapest and Vienna. In this manner, people spent ten days, far away from the miscellaneous affairs of this world.

It was in 1966 that I was invited to the Eranos Conference as a regular lecturer. By chance, Daisetsu Suzuki, who was the first Japanese lecturer of this conference, had given his lectures on Zen for the two previous years. Thus, the interests in Zen thought and Oriental religious thought in general were high among the audience. Some, imitating his way of speaking, muttered without understanding the sense of a sentence, "The sky is blue" (*sora wa aoi nō*), and other cried, "That's it!" (*kore da*), pushing out his hand in front of others. All the people looked happy in their own way.

Later on, according to the requests, I gave lectures of Oriental religions and philosophies almost every year for the subsequent fifteen years. I not only discussed Zen Buddhism, but also the metaphysics of Lao-tzŭ and Chuang-tzŭ, the semantics of Confucius, such ontologies and the theories of consciousness as Vedānta philosophy, Hua Yen

philosophy, and Yogācāra philosophy, the semiotics of the *I Ching*, Confucian philosophy represented by the Ch'êng brothers, Ch'êng I Ch'uan and Ch'êng Ming Tao, and Chu-tzŭ, the shamanism of *Ch'u Tz'ŭ* and so on. At present, looking backward, they constituted a period of my life, which was really happy like a dream, but extremely fruitful for the establishment of my academic work.

Toshihiko Izutsu
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